

Jhana Grove Retreat Selected Q&A 2011

Sayadaw U Tejaniya



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NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO
SAMMĀ SAMBUDDHASSA

Homage to Him, the Blessed One, the Worthy One,
the Perfectly Self-Enlightened One

Acknowledgements

My special gratitude goes to my teacher, the late Venerable Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kosalla Mahā Thera, who taught me Dhamma and the right attitude for my spiritual development and meditation practice.

I want to express my appreciation to all yogis. Their questions and difficulties have once again inspired many of the explanations in the Dhamma discussions. I really hope that this selection will help yogis to better understand mindfulness meditation and to deepen their practice.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the completion of this selection.

Ashin Tejaniya

Dear Reader,

This is a selection of questions and answers and teachings from the retreat given by Sayadaw U Tejaniya at Jhana Grove, Australia in November 2011. If possible the questions have been kept in their original form in order that readers can understand the context of Sayadaw's answers and comments, some questions and answers have been edited to facilitate comprehension.

The selection of Q&A here is presented by theme in alphabetical order for easy reference, some of the teachings have been extracted from Q&As not included in the selection and are presented in the form of 'Dhamma Inspiration', Dhamma reminders given by Sayadaw in the Guided

Meditations during the retreat are also included. For the selected Q&As we tried to present themes that were not included in the book "Awareness Alone is not Enough" or where Sayadaw has given different explanations to similar themes. Some **Pāli** terms are used in the discussions, please refer to the glossary at the end for a short explanation, for more complete definitions please consult Buddhist texts and dictionaries.

This selection has been produced for yogis practicing at the Shwe Oo Min Dhamma Sukha Tawya Meditation Center. It is meant as a source of information and inspiration for yogis, please note that this certainly cannot replace the personal guidance of the teacher. And since most of the questions here are made based on yogis' personal experiences, perhaps you may find some of the advice not useful to you. As mentioned in the book "Awareness Alone is not Enough" please only apply what immediately speaks to you and what you can easily put into practice.

We have tried to transcribe and edit the Q&As and Sayadaw U Tejaniya's teachings as accurately as possible. Please excuse any errors made in the transcription and editing process. Kindly contact us to point out any mistakes.

Finally we show our deepest appreciation and gratitude to Sayadaw U Tejaniya for guiding and supporting us in our practice with great patience. We also give thanks to all those who have contributed in this process: the yogis who participated in the retreat, the interpreter Ma Thet, Alexis Santos, Amy Wang, Calvin Lee, Christine Lem, Elizabeth Derow, Hakon Solarin, Heidi Ché, Monica Antunes, Raúl Saldaña, Seonrae and anyone unintentionally left out here.

May all beings benefit from this gift of Dhamma.

The editors, compiler and transcribers.

Table of Content

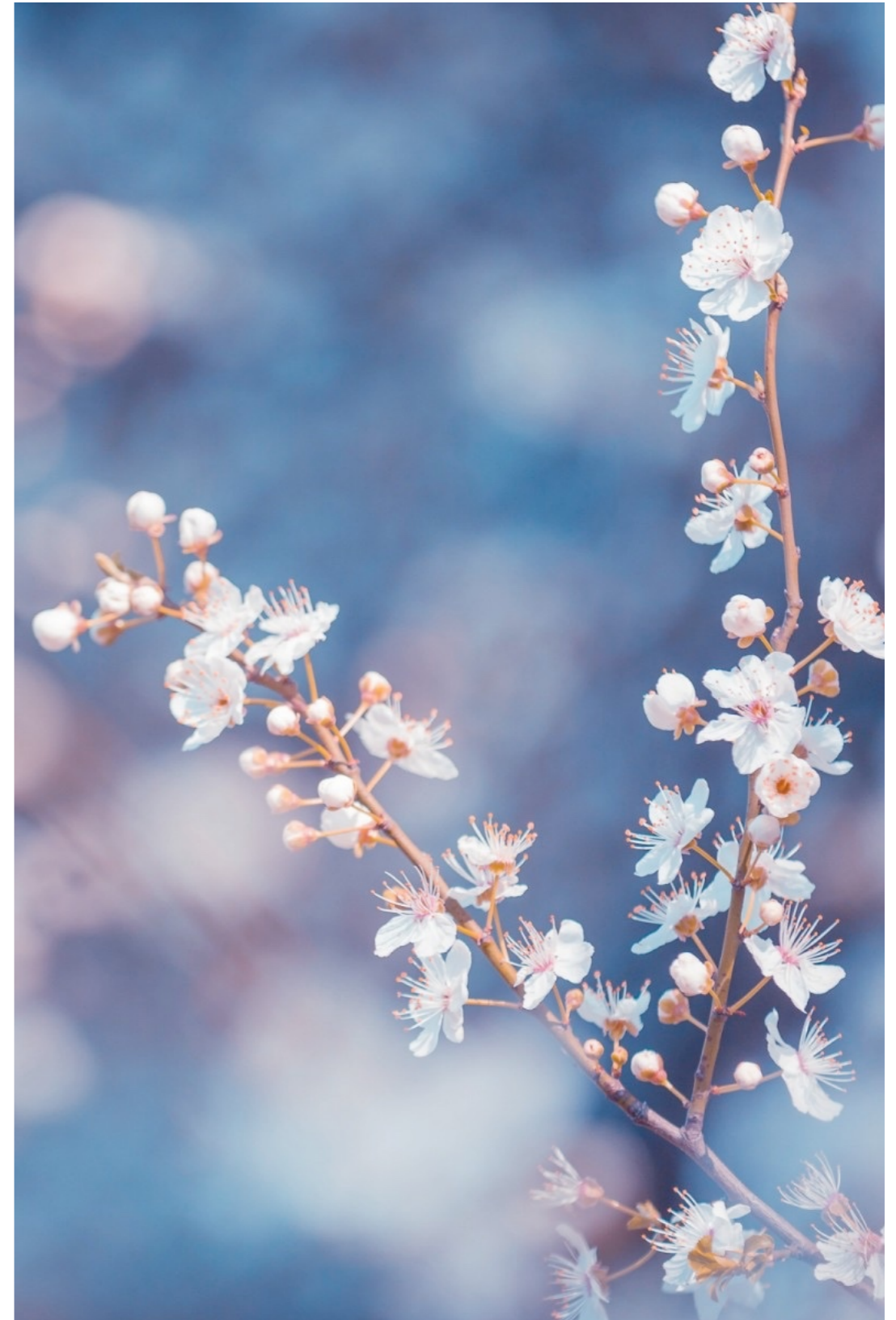
1. Meditation	8	2.23 Intuition	85
2. Selected Q&A by theme	23	2.24 'It's difficult to meditate'	87
2.1 Acceptance	24	2.25 Jhāna	90
2.2 Agitation	26	2.26 Kamma	91
2.3 Anger	27	2.27 Knowing Mind and Object	93
2.4 As much as you do, as much as you get	30	2.22 Magga ñāṇa	97
2.5 Awareness + wisdom, investigation, asking questions, interest	33	2.29 Many Minds	98
2.6 Awareness and No Awareness	38	2.30 Memory	100
2.7 Choiceless Awareness	43	2.31 Metta/ Karunā	101
2.8 Concepts and Reality	44	2.32 Mind Power	105
2.9 Death	50	2.33 Mind Process	106
2.10 Delusion	51	2.34 Nāma-rūpa	108
2.11 Dreams/ Sleep	53	2.35 Nibbāna	109
2.12 Drowsiness/ Dream like states	55	2.36 Objects	111
2.13 Dukkha	58	2.37 Observing the Observing Mind/ The Knower	115
2.14 Every moment is new	59	2.38 Pain, Anxiety & Fear	122
2.18 Fear/Projection of mind	61	2.39 Patience/ Persistence	125
2.16 Focus or Bird's Eye View	63	2.40 Personal Effort/ Right Effort/ Effortless	127
2.17 Formal practice/ Retreat/ Daily Life	67	2.41 Positive Thinking	132
2.18 Greed, Attachment in the Practice	71	2.42 Preconceived Ideas	134
2.19 Grief	74	2.43 Quiet and Peaceful	137
2.20 Honesty	76	2.44 Reading	139
2.21 "I"	78	2.45 Reflect, Track Back experiences	140
2.22 Intention	81	2.46 Right Information	141

2.47 Right View	143
2.48 Samatha & Vipassanā	146
2.49 Satipaṭṭhāna	148
2.50 Seeing & Looking	149
2.51 Sensual Pleasure	151
2.52 Sickness	152
2.53 Skilful Awareness, Attitude	154
2.54 Society, Family	156
2.55 Specific Characteristics	164
2.56 Spiritual Urgency	166
2.57 Step Back	167
2.56 Talking	170
2.59 Teacher	174
2.60 Thinking/ The Intention to Think	177
2.61 Tuning, Balance/ How to Practise	184
2.62 Upekkhā	188
2.63 Watching Defilements	189
2.64 Wisdom/ Understanding	196
3. Dhamma Inspiration	201
3.1 Dhamma Inspiration	202
3.2 Dhamma Reminders in Guided Meditation	210

Glossary

Meditation

Meditation means cultivating good, **kusala** (wholesome) qualities of mind. We want to encourage, cultivate, and allow these qualities to flourish in the mind.



Meditation

About meditation

Meditation means cultivating good, kusala (wholesome) qualities of mind. We want to encourage, cultivate, and allow these qualities to flourish in the mind.

We use objects, the things that we come in contact with, as the basis upon which to develop these good qualities of mind, such as the five **indriyas** (spiritual faculties): **sati** (awareness), **samādhi** (stability of mind), **saddhā** (faith), **virīya** (effort), and **paññā** (wisdom).

Here we practice Satipaṭṭhāna, the foundations of mindfulness. This practice is based on mindfulness. There are four foundations of mindfulness: mindfulness of body, feelings, mind, and nature (meaning everything). These four foundations (body, feelings, mind, and nature) are what we consider as objects. So there is the mindfulness, and there is the object, because you will always be mindful or aware of

some object or another. It could be the body, the mind, feelings, or anything else.

What we are most interested in is the mindfulness rather than the object. What I want to emphasize and discuss with you more is the mindfulness itself, the mind that is mindful, because the work of meditation is purely the work of the mind. Meditation is not done by the objects that we are observing. In Pāli there is a saying that **bhāvanā** (meditation) is the work of the mind itself.

Object and awareness

In meditation two parts come together: the objects or your experience (ie the things that you are aware of) and the awareness itself.

Very generally speaking, everybody has only six potential objects because there are six sense doors: sight, smell, sound, touch, taste, and the mind itself (thoughts and so on.) When we use the six objects to build sati (awareness), samādhi (stability of mind) and ultimately paññā (wisdom) in the mind, this is called meditation.

Motivation

It is very important for the meditating mind—the awareness or mindfulness—to be a wholesome mindfulness or awareness, free of defilement. If any defilement—greed, aversion or delusion—is part of the mindfulness then right meditation does not happen.

In the same way, it is very important not to be wanting or desiring something from the practice, or developing aversion to something in your practice, when these happen or when you don't know what to do in your practice, that's when right practice isn't quite happening. So that's basically **lobha** (greed), **dosa** (aversion), and **moha** (delusion.) The most common failing for all of us as meditators is greed in meditation. When we have greed in our meditation, ie when we are trying to get something in or from our meditation, we use a lot of energy.

It is the same in all three cases—greed, aversion, and delusion. When we want something from the practice (lobha) we start to use a lot of energy. When we have aversion (dosa) to something in the practice, we also start to use a lot of energy. And when we don't know what to do (moha), we suddenly start using a lot of energy.

Right Energy

You don't need to use a lot of energy. Just to know and to recognize what is happening with yourself does not require a lot of energy.

- Do you know that you are seeing? Can you recognize that you are seeing?
- Before I asked you, did you know that you were seeing?
- You were seeing, but did you realize that seeing was happening? That it was part of your experience?

When we wake up in the morning, the first thing we do is open our eyes and see, but we never really realize that seeing is happening.

Just now, when you recognized that you were seeing, how much energy did it take to recognize that you were seeing? Nothing! A tiny little bit...

That's what I'm trying to demonstrate about awareness, it's just this recognition of the experiences of your senses.

In practicing mindfulness or mindfulness meditation, people often misunderstand mindfulness; they think they have to use a lot of effort to pay attention to something. But just now we saw how, for example, recognizing that you are seeing does not require a lot of energy.

You may recognize that you are seeing, that you are hearing, you may recognize something on your skin, what you are tasting, etc, these are just examples. In a very general way, all you are doing is becoming conscious of yourself; for example you are sitting, and you are aware of that.

What else have you become conscious of in yourself?

Yogi: Hearing.

Yogi: Breathing.

SUT: And?

SUT: Temperature, all the touching sensations, movement, feelings...



Conscious of yourself

There are a lot of things that you might be aware or conscious of in yourself. You don't have to focus on only one thing for a long, long time. Whether you are aware of an ongoing physical or mental process, something physical in your body or something that you are feeling, something that is bothering you or something that is making you feel good, whatever you become conscious of, when you are conscious that's when you are meditating. What I'm interested in is that you know that something is going on, that you are conscious of yourself.

The cornerstone of mindfulness meditation is the mindfulness itself, that you are aware, conscious. When you use your energy to focus on one thing all the time sometimes you will tend to miss the rest of what is going on in your body and mind. When you focus a lot on one thing you may fail to notice other things that might be significant.

Initially you won't be aware of a lot of things at once because the mindfulness is not expanded, it hasn't been built up. You haven't developed the habit of constantly being aware. You will just be aware of a limited number of things, one or two at a time. But as the awareness develops, as you continue to remain conscious and the awareness becomes sharper, you might notice that the awareness seems to expand, it seems to receive a lot more, much more easily. You naturally become conscious of many things at once.

A yogi's duties

The cultivation of meditation means the cultivation of the quality of mind of mindfulness. Yogis have three duties or parts to play in the mindfulness process: to have right view, to have mindfulness or consciousness, and to sustain that mindfulness or consciousness continuously.

You may remain aware of one object for some time or you may become aware of a couple of objects for some time. The objects may change, they may become more or less—it doesn't matter. What is important is that you are aware.

You need to check yourself, whether you are conscious, whether you are aware, and whether you have right view or right attitude.

View and attitude of awareness

Right view or right attitude is to accept anything and everything that you experience as part of nature. It doesn't matter whether it's a loud sound or an itch, a pleasant sensation or happiness—all these are natural. If you feel angry, it's natural, just observe, be conscious that this is what is happening now.

In everything that you experience, everything you come in contact with, remind yourself that this is just how things are. This is the object, this is what is being known. You are not

going to identify the experience with something or somebody. It is not somebody making a loud sound, or something that made you smile, it's just what's happening right now in the mind. The mind has experienced this. When it's hot, it's hot, when it's cold, it's cold. It's not 'I'm hot' or 'I'm cold.' It's not a person or a thing, it's just an experience.

When we don't inject this right view once in a while our natural inclination is to identify with the experience, 'it's my experience,' 'it's happening to me,' 'I am this.' And when this identification with the experience—'I am disturbed' or 'I am happy'—comes in, defilements quickly follow.

Initially you might sometimes have to try to think to see if you can take this view. But if you are able to inject some of this right view into the experience, when you are actually successful in seeing the experience with right view, you will find that defilements don't follow.

When you're able to accept what is happening naturally as it is—for example it's hot and you are able to see that this is just an experience—that this is what is being experienced now, then feelings of aversion, of needing to get away from the heat, of making yourself more comfortable and all that, may not follow. You may be able to accept that this is an experience, and stay with it to observe it and be with it.

Dhamma is nature, everything that happens naturally is dhamma, dhamma is everything, everywhere.

We are trying to see what is, exactly as it is, and not embellish it with our opinions, judgments, and ideas.

For example, when there is pain, do we like the pain? No? That's because we have decided that pain is not good. But pain is a natural phenomenon. When there's body, there will be discomfort. It's not a problem, it's just a manifestation of nature. When we think it's a problem, when we think that there should not be pain, then every time pain comes we make it a problem.

When we think differently, when we can think of things as being natural, as being what they are supposed to be, then we don't react towards what is happening with attraction or aversion. When we are practicing the Dhamma, this right view is very, very important. When right view is not there we find ourselves just reacting and not growing. But if we are able to see things with right view, we are able to cultivate mindfulness and carry on.

Developing samādhi

Here we are not going to develop samādhi (stability of mind) by focusing on something to calm the mind down, instead we are going to develop samādhi by trying to inject right view. When right view is present the mind does not react, and it therefore retains its stability; that is samādhi. Slowly this samādhi will start working together with the continuity of

awareness. The stability will grow as you continue to be aware.

When and where to practice?

The practice of Dhamma happens all the time and everywhere. As long as you are conscious or awake, from the moment you wake up until the moment you fall asleep, every moment is the time to practice Dhamma.

It's not difficult. You're sitting and you know that, right? Is it difficult just to know that? Or just to recognize that you are walking? Just that.

What's important is sustaining that awareness. In the beginning the awareness may be very simple, just recognizing walking for example, nothing specific. But when you sustain that consciousness of being in motion, after a while you will find that specific things start coming into the consciousness. You start to become conscious of a little sound here, a little feeling there, you become more and more conscious of small things. Everything starts to come in little by little. Allow it to enter into your consciousness naturally. All you need to do is to stay with your mind.

Thinking

We may think that when we start drifting off into our thoughts we are not with ourselves anymore, but if you are conscious that you are thinking you are still with yourself.

We're not trying to make the mind still to the point that it is not thinking, that's not what I mean by samādhi. That's not how we still the mind. What we are trying to do is to be conscious, not still. Our goal is to be conscious, to be awake and aware, whatever the experience might be.



If you're walking, you might just be conscious of the whole form moving, walking, you don't have to concentrate on the sole of your foot or the tip of your head, or anything like that. You don't have to choose specifically what to be aware of.

Why are we trying to be mindful? What is our goal?

Are you trying to be mindful because we are in retreat? Or because Sayadaw says you must? Why do you want to be mindful? Why do you want to become conscious of yourself?

Yogi: Less suffering.

Yogi: More peaceful.

Yogi: More awake.

Yogi: Aware of what's going on.

SUT: Yes, and the whole point of all this is so that we can understand. Mindfulness is a learning process. In the process of being mindful and conscious of ourselves, we learn about ourselves. When we really understand something, it's like an epiphany, the mind suddenly understands and then becomes free of what was encumbering it. That's what the ultimate goal is. So being conscious leads to the awakening of understanding, which leads to peace.

Peace itself is not the goal. If peace is your goal then at those times when you cannot achieve peace by doing meditation you will not know what to do. When the goal is to understand, you can try to understand suffering too.

When you are peaceful don't think that you have reached the end of your journey, there is still more to understand. When we are very peaceful we get very comfortable in the feeling of

peace and sometimes it becomes moha. We bliss out... peace becomes our goal. We indulge in the peaceful feeling, get attached to it...

Yogi: Get cranky when it's not there...

Interpreter: Yes, get cranky when it's not there, most importantly.

SUT: If we don't have understanding, if our understanding is not growing, then we have to use our wisdom to work towards it, to wake it up and start to build it up. Developing wisdom is like making money: in order to make more money you have to invest money. Likewise, in order to gain more wisdom you have to invest wisdom.

The goal of mindfulness is to develop wisdom, understanding. Whether the experience is happy or unhappy, if we know how, if we allow the mind to explore, eventually something can be understood from every experience.

So rather than focusing on other peripheral experiences and making them the goal of your meditation, I want you to practice mindfulness and use your innate wisdom in order to develop more wisdom.

Interest and wisdom

We may not recognize that a simple thing like interest is a characteristic of wisdom. When you are conscious of

something in your experience and you become interested in it, your own wisdom is actually already at work.

When we're conscious in a general way and things are coming into the mind, they seem to come and go and come and go. Don't think that this is a waste of time. The mind is in fact collecting data so that at some point in the future, when all the data comes together and makes sense, understanding can arise.

When the mind has collected enough data to enable it to investigate the experiences that come through the stream of consciousness and get a full picture, that's when understanding arises. So don't underestimate the value of everything you are conscious of, even though it may not make sense right away.

When we become interested in something, that's when we start to look at it in more detail and that's when we discover more about it, the mind will then understand more. This happens naturally.

When you are being aware of yourself, there's not much else besides your physical and mental process. It's only when you make the effort to be aware of yourself as much as possible that you begin to notice more about yourself, and you will be able to learn and understand more from this.

So anytime is Dhamma time. Don't forget yourself—even in the toilet! Don't allow your mind not to be aware—it might do

this by itself—but don't consciously allow your mind not to be aware.

It's not only while on the sitting cushion that you are supposed to be aware. Regardless of what you're doing, whether you're taking a shower or eating, looking at something or somebody, or thinking, please be conscious of yourself, be aware.

And please be conscious of the fact that you see and look. Do you all know how to practice meditation with your eyes open? Yes? Just being aware.

Practicing Dhamma in daily life

I want you to be able to bring the practice of Dhamma into daily life so that life itself becomes the practice of the Dhamma. I ask you to be aware of when you are seeing and when you are looking, because that's something that's very much part of our daily lives. One of the ways you can bring Dhamma into life is to be aware that you are seeing, then you will be meditating with your eyes open.

As you live life you should be practicing Dhamma. Dhamma and life must not be separated. Dhamma must be a part of our lives otherwise when Dhamma is not present in our lives, defilements will be there.

Why do some yogis who have practiced for years feel that they have not changed or that they may not have matured?

Because they don't integrate Dhamma into their lives, they don't try to be aware when they are living their normal lives outside of retreat time.

Just as we make the effort to practice Dhamma during a retreat, when we are back home we need to try to maintain the effort to be aware, although it may be to a lesser degree. Dhamma and defilements are always engaging in a tug-of-war.

Meditating with open eyes

You can also try practicing sitting meditation with your eyes open. Seeing can be one of the objects of meditation, it's a very obvious object. Seeing is happening, sight is happening. Can you choose not to see when your eyes are open?

You can choose to be conscious of it.

The recognition that seeing is happening might come again and again, that's all you need to do. It's not so much to be interested in what we are seeing—the person, the floor, etc—but the very fact of sight itself. We all know how to be aware of hearing, right? Does that seem easier? Why have we never noticed seeing? If we are not proficient at being aware of all our sense doors then we can't really say that we are completely proficient in meditation.

Some yogis have told me that they are afraid to open their eyes after a sitting meditation session. I ask why, and they say,

“Because when I open my eyes my samādhi is gone.” That’s not very good samādhi. If the mere act of opening the eyes makes the stability of the mind go away then that samādhi was not very strong or stable. Whether we are seeing, walking, eating, taking a shower, or sitting, samādhi must always be there.

What is the cause of samādhi? What causes samādhi to be there? Right view and continuity of awareness. Persistence, or sustaining the awareness, together with right view naturally make the mind stable.

We mentioned earlier that meditation means cultivation of the good qualities of mind, like stability of mind and awareness. So every time we see or look, instead of having aversion arise, have consciousness, right view, and stability of mind arise. When we hear something, instead of having greed, aversion, or delusion towards it, be conscious of it.

When a person uses the experiences at all six sense doors to develop awareness, stability of mind, wisdom, and so on, you call that person a meditator or a Dhamma person.

The six sense doors are exactly the same for a person who practices Dhamma and a person who doesn’t practice Dhamma. The difference is the mind—the consciousness and the understanding.

A person who does not practice Dhamma will have experiences at the six sense doors and react to them with aversion, greed, and delusion. A person practicing Dhamma

will use the objects at the six sense doors to develop consciousness, stability of mind, understanding, wisdom, and all the good qualities of mind, instead of greed, aversion, and delusion.

The six sense doors are the same for everybody; only the mind differs, the point of view of the mind is different. If the person has right understanding, right view, and some knowledge from somewhere then they will regard the six sense doors differently and use them for development.



The three kinds of wisdom

There are three kinds of wisdom: things that we hear or read about, Dhamma talks—such as this talk right now— books,

etc, all these are borrowed knowledge or borrowed wisdom. Then there is your own innate wisdom, when you think about something logically in your own mind. And finally there is developed wisdom. When you use the first two kinds of wisdom, and you are conscious and mindful and you learn something more, you find a point of view that you did not see before, that is developed wisdom.

When we get right information it is borrowed wisdom, but right information can also help us to develop the other two kinds of wisdom. Right information allows the mind to use it to develop more wisdom.

We go for retreats and listen to Dhamma talks from teachers and we then use that information in our practice. That's how we use wisdom to develop more wisdom. When we have right information, we can think of things in the right way and then we can practice in the right way, and do the right things.

When we have some information that allows us to see things in a more wholesome way, from a different point of view so that we don't develop aversion or get attracted or attached to things, that's how we develop our wisdom.

You hear this sort of information and as you practice you attempt to inject right view; then you begin to realize that when you see or hear something, there's just seeing or hearing, that it is just an experience. Someone who has not heard this information will think, 'I saw' or 'I heard.' It's a different point of view.

The Dhamma point of view of 'this is nature' or 'this is what is happening,' is a different way of seeing things to the normal, worldly point of view of 'this is happening to me' or 'this is my experience.' In meditation this view is very important because the view, or lens, through which we face an experience, determines the subsequent reactions or responses of the mind.

Thinking and seeing

Thinking and seeing are very similar in nature. When we think we get involved in our thoughts very easily, we identify with them and with our thinking.

This is because of two things. Firstly, because of habit: it's our habit to think, to become interested in what we are thinking about, the storyline and the concepts. Secondly, because of identification with the thinker.

It's the same with seeing: when we see, when we have our eyes open, immediately our attention is with the concepts outside. And it is the mind's habit to take those as objects and to be out there, rather than to be aware of the seeing (just as we are not aware of the thinking.)

In the practice of being aware of thinking, you have to make yourself conscious that you're thinking, you have to remind yourself again and again, 'Oh, thinking is happening, thinking

is happening,' until you are able to view thinking objectively and not identify with the thinker.

If you apply the same pattern to seeing and keep reminding yourself, 'seeing is happening,' you are able to step away from it a little bit. Remind yourself, 'seeing is happening, seeing is happening,' and you can stop identifying with the see-er.

I always tell beginners not to watch thoughts continuously at first because we get swept away, we get sucked into the thoughts. Recognize that there is thought, a thought has arisen, thinking is happening, make a note of it, 'this is happening,' and then come back to being conscious of yourself in another way.

Initially you have to go back and forth, being aware of thinking and then coming back to yourself, being aware of thinking and coming back to yourself, so as not to get lost in the thoughts.

You can do the same with seeing, briefly try opening your eyes and then closing them again and then being aware, and then opening and closing them again and then being aware, in order to become conscious of seeing. There is seeing and there is not seeing, both are objects.

When the eyes are open the mind tends to be slightly more awake because there is one more sense consciousness. When there is one more sense consciousness, there's one more object. When we have our eyes closed, it's easy for the mind to

think, to get lost in thought. It's easy for the mind to get sleepy and to conjure up images in the mind.

You can experiment with both. Choose whatever gives you better mindfulness at any given time. What is always most important is the quality of the mind. You will learn to choose when it's best to keep your eyes open and when it's best to close your eyes in order to be in states that are more wholesome for your own mind.

In daily life we don't have the luxury of keeping our eyes closed for long periods of time except when we sleep. If we make it a practice to be conscious of seeing, then in daily life, because our eyes are always open, this consciousness can come back to help make us more aware during the day.

Are seeing and looking the same?

Yogi: No.

SUT: Looking, listening, and paying attention are the same kind of mind, the same type of movement of mind. They are active movements. The sense doors are different but the movement of the mind is the same, it's an active attention. When the mind pays attention through the eye door, it's looking; when it pays attention through the ear door, it's listening; when it pays attention through the mind door, it's paying attention.

You can also be conscious of that movement of mind: the mind is listening now, the mind is looking now, the mind is

now paying attention. When you look, can you not also be conscious that the mind is doing that? That's not difficult either is it? Seeing is passive, looking is active. You can be conscious of the difference. As long as the eyes are open we see, even without looking. Without listening we still hear. Similarly, without paying too much attention we can remain conscious.



Yoniso manasikāra

Have you all heard the words 'right attitude' or 'wise attention'? In Pāli: yoniso manasikāra (wise attention), and the opposite is **ayoniso manasikāra**. Ayoniso manasikāra is when the mind pays attention to something through the

wrong lens, when you look at something from the wrong point of view. Say somebody opens the door and it's noisy, and you think, "Why is that person making noise?" That's wrong view.

If you think, "There's a sound, I am conscious of it," that's right view.

The literal translations of yoniso manasikāra and ayoniso manasikāra are 'taking it to heart in the right way' and 'taking it to heart in the wrong way.' When you take it to heart in the right way, it leads to subsequent kusala minds, wholesome states of mind. If you take it to heart in the wrong way, the subsequent minds are **akusala**, unwholesome.

If you are experiencing pain, the attitude can be, 'oh, this is an experience,' 'this is happening.' With this attitude you might not develop so much aversion, you might not feel so much pain. But if the attitude is, 'I am in so much pain,' then the pain and the aversion are stronger.

For example when there is pain in the leg and then the pain goes away, does the leg disappear as well? Why do we say there is pain in the leg? Or that the leg is painful? If the leg is painful, when the pain has gone the leg must also be gone!

Actually the leg is the leg and the pain is the pain, and they are different. They are separate. Pain is a natural phenomenon. If you sit in one position for a long time without moving, pain will come. Is that a problem? It's just a natural process. If you don't want to experience pain, just make yourself comfortable! But if you want to understand pain and also the

experience of pain, the experience of how the mind reacts to pain or how the mind creates more pain for itself, then don't make yourself comfortable yet. Take the time to observe what is happening in the mind and body. This is the time to study these things.

You can investigate this if you have the opportunity. For as long as you can tolerate the pain you might want to learn from it. When the pain is there, what does the mind think? How does that thinking make the mind feel? How does the thinking affect the feeling and vice versa? It becomes an experiment. When there is a little bit of pain, how does the mind think about it? What does the mind feel about it? And then when the pain starts increasing, how does the mind think about it? How does the mind's attitude about it change? As it changes you want to see how the mind changes with it. You want to see how a change in the thinking and state of mind—seeing things through this new lens—affects your experience of the physical.

This is why meditation is very interesting, because you are learning about yourself. You want to know more about yourself.

If we truly want happiness, we need to have understanding. When there is no true understanding, happiness is not completely ours. It is something incidental or coincidental—sometimes we are happy and sometimes we aren't. We don't have full control of it. When you truly understand then you are in control of it.

You will investigate the way the mind works, the functions of the mind itself. Hopefully you won't just do this here all day, but also when you go home.

Tension and defilements

Throughout the day I want you to check whether you are getting tense or whether you are relaxed. I want you to notice this. Any tension is an indication that you are developing some defilement, either you are wanting something, disliking something, or you are feeling confused about something. Fear, anxiety, or any kind of defilement bring tension to the mind, so check this often.

If you do find tension, check both the mind and the body. You will notice that there is never tension only in the mind, it will also be translated into tension in some part of the body. If you consciously relax those tensions, it's also a kind of meditation.

Meditation should be fun!

You're going to be practicing all day long, so please don't do anything that makes you tired or stressed out. Don't stress yourself out with meditation! We need to be interested in meditation so that we want to meditate, rather than feel that it's something fearful or difficult, or that we have an exam to pass. It's nothing like that.

There are no bells on this retreat, but when there are bells on a retreat how do you feel when the bell rings? Do you feel, 'Oh yeah! Let's go and sit.' Or do you feel, 'Oh... I have to walk now...' or, 'I have to sit now...' Meditation should be a source of joy. We should find it interesting and joyful. It should be an exploration, it should be fun. Meditation must be like this!

Selected Q&A by theme

Whatever we know is fun, just know it because it's important to know. If we develop this habit of knowing whatever comes up and knowing that we're knowing, it becomes easier to know in daily life.



Acceptance

Yogi: This afternoon I was looking at the quality of the awareness and I found it to be a little bit lazy, a little bit sluggish. Should I just accept that? Or is there a way of energizing?

SUT: Firstly, yes, you need to just accept it. And then you need to check why it is like that. Why is it sluggish? What is the mind thinking? What's the attitude towards the practice? Does the mind understand how to be aware? What is it doing?

The Buddha said, when the mind is in a good state, know it's in a good state, when the mind in a bad state, know it's in a bad state. He didn't say try to change the state. He said, recognize the state.

We're not trying to control the experience, or change it, we're just trying to know the experience. But mostly if we judge it, and say this is not a good state, then we want to change it. Then dosa is there.

Right attitude. If we want only what is good and we don't want anything bad in our experience then it's not really fair, is it? That's a defilement, wanting only what's good. We grasp what we think is good, we push away what we think is not good. When we see that something is not good, don't push it away—

[in English] 'This is not good', but the mind is not angry. It should be like this.

Normally the mind just immediately pushes away what it finds not good.

Yogi: So this is an opportunity to learn acceptance?

SUT: Right. Some of us can't accept when the mind is grasping, we don't want the mind to grasp. We can't accept it when the mind is aversive, we don't want the mind to be aversive. My teacher used to say, "Do not grasp and do not push away." And I couldn't understand it at that age because in my experience the mind either liked something or didn't like something. I couldn't think of anything in between.

When I understood more then I realized that it's possible to understand what's going on and remain neutral. Understanding that it's pleasant or unpleasant. And I understood that it's the middle way that allows us to be neutral.

Grasping is one extreme, resistance is the other extreme. How do we walk the centre line? There's only wisdom. Wisdom

knows what is pleasant and what is not pleasant and does not resist or attach. It knows both but is able to remain in the centre.

Yogi: Do we need to accept the unawareness of the unawareness? Do we need some understanding of the fact that there is unawareness of unawareness? That there is delusion about delusion? And that we must accept that?

SUT: Yes, that is right. We must know that unawareness of unawareness happens. Accepting that is a kind of wisdom. In a sense it is clear comprehension, just knowing that this is how it is. Understanding is very different from just seeing something or observing something. We need to recognize when we understand things, and we need to recognize the understanding that accompanies our observations.

We want to recognize these wisdoms. When we do a job and become skillful at it, even something like housework, we then have an understanding of how to do that job well. That's understanding, that's wisdom. It's the same in meditation.



Agitation

Yogi: Yesterday we went on that forest walk I was very easily mindful. But when we came back I found a sort of agitation for all evening. And I often find at home when I do meditate, in the evenings I do get a lot of agitation in meditation and it stops me. The trouble is I know you're going to say, 'watch the agitation,' but that's really hard when you're agitated. Is there anything that I can do?

SUT: Agitation is interesting. Attitude is key. It's difficult to be aware in the way we want to be aware when agitated. You must remember that agitation is also a natural state of mind. What is getting in the way is that you don't like it, you don't want to be agitated. The second thing is to actually have interest in the actual state of agitation, 'what is agitation like?' Instead of watching it to make it go away, allow it to be here. So long as it's there you can investigate the nature of agitation. When it's not there you can't investigate the nature of agitation.

Possibly you have a personality which likes freedom, so when you are in an informal environment, when you are free to do as you wish, awareness comes easily to you. But when you are put in a form, when this is the form that meditation should take, trying to sit at home, or when I come back from certain time then and I have to go back to the meditation hall. So the feeling that I 'have to' meditate comes back rather than what you were doing at a certain time and you are just being aware. It's a wrong thought.

In the book "Don't look down on the defilements, they will laugh at you", there is a cartoon with all these thoughts 'I should do this', 'must do this', 'have to do this' and then there is a one-ton stone on his head. So the attention of thinking it has to be some way.

Yogi: Yes, that's helpful, if I turn around and look I do like freedom.

SUT: So that's why the mind is becoming agitated. So maybe you can change your posture when you meditate (Laughter). This formal posture, when we put our hands together, cross our legs and sit up straight, it feels like a log sometimes. Some yogis are like fully padded up and after that may be they are sleepy. (Laughter)

The moment that the mind takes it seriously it starts getting tense. Agitation comes with that.

Yogi: I recognize that now.

Anger

Yogi: If someone is insulting you, you shouldn't get angry?

SUT: Why suffer twice? They insult me and I get angry and make myself suffer. Why?

My teacher used to say, "When I am upset, hurt, angry, the fault lies within myself." From then on I would always ask myself when I got angry, "Why am I getting angry? What is it that I want? Somebody else is doing something wrong. Why am I getting upset?" Why not let that person suffer if they are the one doing something wrong?

Anger doesn't understand reason. Anger doesn't understand whether it is beneficial or not, whether it is necessary or not. Anger just wants to be angry. There is a phrase in Pali that says *dosa* knows no cause and no effect. *Dosa* does not understand cause and *dosa* does not understand effect, and the same can be said for *lobha*.

Yogi: Although I have experienced looking at anger and looking at aversion and seeing them subside, I don't understand. I've experienced it but I don't understand it.

SUT: We have to watch anger, or whatever it may be, many, many times. We have to investigate everything many, many times, and one of those times when the mind is in the right mood, when there's no greed or aversion in the mind, and we're just investigating naturally, one of those times something will be understood. But it takes repeated practice.

Generally at those times when understanding arises, the mind is strong, it's sort of at its best, there's been continuous awareness, there is no craving to understand something, there is no aversion towards the experience, there is full interest in the experience. It comes when you least expect it. And then prior to that experience we've probably been watching whatever it is over and over again, whether it's anger or something else.

Let's say we understood something about anger eventually, we may have, prior to that, investigated anger many times, investigated it in many ways, understanding how anger arises, not as in the object outside that causes the anger, but in the mind, the ideas in the mind. Maybe it's the preconceived ideas we have, something that we want, that we think things should be done a certain way. These things lead to us feeling anger

about something and then how the anger feeds itself. These are things that we may have discovered on the way. Different little things that finally culminate in one huge understanding.

There are many different points of view from which we can understand.

Is it necessary to get angry? [Laughter]

So that's a way of checking. If we look at anger every time it arises, we might begin to see whether it's necessary or not. I think there are some people who think it's necessary.

I used to think so. At one time I would shout at someone and that would be the end of it, so I thought, 'Oh, pretty useful.' I thought that was a good thing to do. It was much later in life, after I kept using anger, that I realized that sometimes it leads to other trouble. It doesn't end there. And then if you meet someone with more anger than you then it will lead to even bigger trouble.

When I'd been observing the mind for a long time I realized that there was nothing about anger that was beneficial in any way, I would be talking to my sister-in-law and she was annoyed with someone she would say—it literally sounds like this in Burmese—"Isn't it good to be angry about that?" in the sense that it was something you should be angry about. And I kept saying to her, there's nothing you should ever get angry about. There's nothing that is worth being angry about. And she couldn't accept it.

When people want to be angry they always try to get people to agree with them, to agree that there is a reason to get angry about whatever it is. If someone is being righteous about their anger, as if there's a reason to be angry, that's dangerous because the mind is preparing to blow up real big! [Laughter] Because if it finds a good enough reason and someone agrees with it, then it's going to let itself go.

Once the mind starts to justify its anger, and the mind says 'you should be angry about this, you can use anger, you can channel anger in a good way', and all that sort of thing, you know it's getting prepared to get angry. It's just one of its cunning strategies.



Yogi: The mind does have genuinely to get to know that it is not useful. There's no short cut. You can't impose a kind of idea of a moral base. That would get in the way of it. That seems really tricky because I think personally my anger actually has to come out more. I don't mean I want to put it on people but I think that I suppress it too quickly all the time.

SUT: Even when we suppress our outward anger, the anger remains inside. That's the anger that we have to observe. It's not skilful to allow anger get to words or action but sometimes we can't help it, it gets to words or action without our knowledge. When it gets to that, if you're still able to remember to be aware, either during or after, it helps us to learn. But if you have a lot of insight there's a lot of observation that can go on without actually causing any harm outside.

Yogi: I think I don't identify it as anger.

SUT: The longer you've been practicing, the more wisdom and awareness there is, and the more you can learn from what you observe. What we want to avoid is intellectually trying to suppress it in the mind. This is what we don't want to do, so that we can investigate it and understand its nature.

There was a time I wanted to do something, I let the greed have its way, I wanted to go see a boxing match. [Laughter] I hadn't seen one for a long time. At that time, the awareness

was very good and I decided, "Okay, I'll go and I'll be mindful."

And I went, I was mindful the whole way. Everything—the journey there, taking the crowded buses in Burma, getting there, queuing to get the tickets, hot, smelly people, the hot, dirty stadium, people around making noise, watching the match, and while they were boxing what I was feeling, whose side I was taking! [Laughter]

And I found it really exhausting. Then the match had a break. In the two or three-minute break they give to the boxers, I was so tired and the mind went inside, I started to watch myself, and I forgot that I was in the stadium. And when they rang the bell the mind said, 'this place is not for you'. And then it became natural, I didn't go to boxing matches after that.

Yogi: And it was a good thing to do, to do the experiment?

SUT: Yes, because I was able to bring my awareness. These are dangerous experiments.

As much as you do, as much as you get

Yogi: It's a bit like when Sayadaw talked about the nose and the smelling and how he went running around saying, "Ah, the nose smells!" There was this 'aha!' experience this morning: this idea of waiting. I mean, you can read in a book, "Wait, be patient." But when you smell the soap and you suddenly realize, "Ah! That's what waiting is."

SUT: You know gold? Whether it's a little speck of gold or a large block of gold—

[in English] Small gold also good. Big gold also good.

If you collect little bits of gold — and it's those little bits that we're collecting. My teacher used to say, if you get a speck or two a day, it's fine. And sometimes we say, "Oh even a speck or two is difficult." Yes, but it's enough.

And then, initially if we're not skilful of course we can't get too much gold.

In meditation there is no luck. [Laughter] One monk asked me, "So long as you put in hard work and you just meditate and meditate, won't you just hit nibbāna one day?" And I said, "No, you don't get to nibbāna by accident, it must come together, and then when the conditions are complete the right effect will happen."

[in English] Cause and effect.

Nature is so fair. Only when you reach the level you need to, you will get what you get from that level.

Yogi: In this day and age we have good teachers and also the Buddhist scriptures. Why is it so difficult for people to attain anything in Buddhism? I'm not even talking about becoming an arahant, just obtaining peaceful states of mind.

SUT: The defilements are strong and our practices are weak.

Yogi: But we have so many teachings out there, so many teachers...

SUT: There's nothing wrong with the teachings, it's the person who practices.

Yogi: But shouldn't that make it easier for us?

SUT: No. It just depends on your practice. First we have to find the suitable practice for us. Then we have to do it dedicatedly. Persistently. Consistently.

You cannot underestimate the value of persistence and dedication. Because the mind arises and passes away that persistence and dedication is absolutely necessary to keep the momentum. But the power of the defilements, the legacy of the defilements is so strong in the mind that as the minds arise and pass away, the legacy that keeps on getting passed on from mind to mind is the legacy of the strong power of the defilements. We just try to build on that one tiny bit of wholesomeness one piece at a time.

One day, just one day, if you can manage a whole day where, when you look back, the balance of wholesome mind states during that day was greater than the balance of unwholesome states—see the difference in what you feel.

Yogi: It is depressing if nothing happens when you're practicing.

SUT: We will get as much as we put in. Input and output!

In the Buddha's time, the Buddha was a perfect teacher, and everybody that he was destined to meet had all made wishes to fulfill their perfections, so when they got to the Buddha, it was like that. They had already put in a lot of work.

The age after the Buddha is a decaying age, it's getting worse and worse. There's nobody that good any more. They're gone.

It's over. All the seniors are gone. Only the rest of us are left. Defilements are strong and we don't practice all the time.

Sometimes I don't like to talk like this to the yogis, because it is depressing. You can get depressed if you think in this way. You mustn't think of it this way.

Yogi: You mentioned the disciples in the time of the Buddha and how they just had to go to the Buddha, listen to a talk or something like that, and then they would become enlightened.

SUT: If we had invested, we would already have met the Buddha and not be here now. I mean, if we had worked hard.

When the Buddha was alive we might have been a nest of worms. You know, the Buddha said one day when he saw a nest of worms, "At the end of my sāsana they will just be becoming human."

Yogi: But sometimes it seems that the mind doesn't like to be ahead, so it likes to go back to suffering.

What I feel is that I've shot myself into a good space and now I need to be patient with it rather than going out and doing something on purpose to, what I call, 'make myself suffer', because then the suffering is the object and then that's coarse, obvious, rather than these more subtle states of mind. Like being in a good space, being in the zone.

SUT: You are exactly right. What we do need is steadiness. This patience is to allow ourselves to just be with it, as it is, every moment—boring or interesting. Just allow it to be like that. And then as you go on, it will expand, it will sharpen, it will grow. That patience is primary.

Just now, you used the word ‘get ahead’, there is no need to get ahead. There is no need to get anywhere. So long as you are working steadily you can’t not move ahead. You will keep moving, it is only that you cannot perhaps move as much as you would like. But so long as you keep working the movement will continue, so you’re always getting ahead.



The work brings its own result, we don’t have to think about what’s going to come or what it should be. We just have to do

the work and we get what we deserve. We can’t wish for more. Craving always wants more, it thinks it should be something else, it thinks it should be better. Wisdom knows that the cause is what we can work with, the effects are beyond our control, so it just works at being patient and doing the work.

[in English] As much as you do, as much as you get already.

Awareness + wisdom, Investigation, asking questions, interest

Yogi: I think I have been asking myself ‘how does the mind feel about this object?’ for example and expecting an answer. I think you’re just telling me that the question is the more important thing, and just to accept how the mind feels about that.

SUT: The question is to bring in interest.

[in English] Not for answer.

Some minds have a propensity naturally to be inclined to think more, to question more. We’re all naturally intelligent in different ways. You’ll notice that whatever your mind has more interest in, whatever your mind is more inclined to, you just have to do it once or twice and your mind will start innovating. It will find ways to do it better, more quickly, more efficiently, more beautifully. The mind always does that and that’s a natural process of mind, and the same thing happens with meditation.

But if you’re not proficient in something, when your natural intelligence is not inclined to that thing—say somebody doesn’t understand computers and how they work—no matter how many times you get to it, you just can’t get the logic of it.

This practice of awareness is a practice of marrying awareness with wisdom. There must be wisdom to guide the awareness, we can’t just blindly be conscious and not really know what the purpose is. When we are just aware continuously, what we do get is samādhi. That’s a natural cause and effect relationship. If you are continuously aware samādhi will arise, but further wisdom may not arise.

Yogi: When a person becomes aware and she has been practicing every day, does it have an effect on the body? Does the physical body feel light?

SUT: Yes. It’s not the body, it’s not physical, it’s mental. The mind is feeling light. During the day, we are mostly aware of physical things because it’s easier, remember to ask yourself, “How is the mind? How am I feeling? Am I aware now?”

[in English] Are you sure? [Laughter]

I don’t want you to answer the question, just ask the question and allow the mind to find the answer naturally. When the

mind asks a question, the attention of the mind is already brought to the answer. For example, if I ask you now, “What do I look like?” then you’ll all look at me, so the question suggests the answer but you don’t have to look for it. The mind will.

If you think of your ear now, instantly your attention is there. Which ear? [Laughter]

If you think of your feet, you are suddenly with the feet, naturally. So the mind’s attention is always at what or where it’s thinking about. That’s why you don’t need a lot of energy to know something, you just need to incline. When you understand the way the mind works then you can use the mind. It’s because we don’t understand the mind that we use so much energy to try to do things with it.

Yogi: When does interest become the movement of mind towards the pleasure? Towards desire or aversion? How do you talk about the difference between interest and attraction?

SUT: It’s very easy, you can tell by your feelings whether it’s just interest or whether it’s starting to veer towards attachment. And when whatever you’re feeling, whatever the mind is doing is wholesome, there is a particular feeling which is associated with wholesome activity in the mind.

If it starts to become slightly unwholesome subtle tensions start to build in the mind... there’s interest, but if you start wanting too much to know what’s happening or wanting too much to get an answer you can feel the tension. The state of mind loses its stability or balance. You won’t feel peaceful any more, you’ll feel agitation or tension.

Yogi: When is it a **papañca** situation and when is it an investigation situation? Sometimes you think you’re investigating whatever is going on and then it becomes a papañca situation.

SUT: When there’s not enough wisdom it can become papañca.

Another Yogi: What’s papañca?

SUT: Like you said, when we go into the ‘because of, because of, because of’, just thinking about it, that’s papañca.

There was somebody who had a lot depression and tried a lot of ways to work with the depression. One of the ways she used was to ask the question ‘why is the mind depressed?’ The first time she heard of this way of working she tried it very simply and it worked. She actually got an answer. And for a while she was free of the depression.

Later, when she became depressed again she tried to use it, and now she had an expectation, she thought ‘if I ask the question I’m going to get the answer and I’m going to be free’, and it didn’t work. All sorts of wrong answers came up.



Yogi: I actually start with **mettā** meditation, and then when my mind is a little calm I start to ask questions. Is this all right?

SUT: Sometimes it’s not yet worth asking a question. Sometimes you can just let yourself observe until you have enough information. Awareness on its own is already gathering information. When you have enough information that it prompts some sort of curiosity, then you can ask a question.

Sometimes we don’t have enough information. We haven’t finished, we haven’t done much observing and yet we ask a question. Then all you have is a question. The question is always to help us to investigate, like a scientist, not to get an answer. It’s like research, you don’t know where the answer will come from, so there’s many ways to look.

The asking of the question, when it’s some area that we are expert in, when you’re doing that work questions come naturally to your mind, don’t they? Like, how can I organize this better? For cooking, when it tastes like this, how can I fix it? Whenever something new comes up, the questions come because you have enough knowledge about that subject to ask an intelligent question. And that’s the way it is in meditation. First we need to have a body of knowledge, so that we have enough background to ask a question about how to go about it.

And sometimes just from listening to everyone, reading the Dhamma, and all sorts of things, we become curious about something.

The Buddha asked questions, is the **rūpa** dukkha or **sukha**? Atta or anatta? Things like that. Not for us to ask right now. [Laughter] Those are examples.

Yogi: I asked questions about bodily pain. If I have a pain somewhere I just ask, “Why? What is it?” Or something like that.

SUT: And what happens?

Yogi: After some time it goes.

SUT: Just keep investigating, watching, asking.

There’s also probably the pressure when you’re meditating during the day, you think, ‘Oh, we’re going to have the interview, what shall I talk about?’ [Laughter] Everybody thinks more closely so they can ask something.

Yogi: In the story of the pendulum, did Sayadaw asked only one question? “How can the mind be so peaceful and suddenly become so angry?”

Interpreter: Not he actually, the mind asked it. The mind just did it all by itself. It was just the right conditions at the right time.

SUT: Yes, while I was practicing of course I had asked questions in my practice previously. I asked questions, tried to investigate, but at some point it happens naturally. One day

there’s a situation, the mind asks a question naturally and finds the answer. Years of practice.

The first time my teacher did that was to ask me, “Why is there rising and falling?” I could think of that theoretically because ‘I’m breathing’. I knew experientially that because I breathed there was rising and falling. Then my teacher asked, “Why is there breathing?” And I couldn’t answer that. It wasn’t in my experience, I didn’t know. I tried to give answers out of the top of my head, “This is natural.” “Because you want to live.” But it wasn’t experiential and my teacher didn’t accept them. So I went and started trying, trying. It took me a week.

I watched and watched and looked and tried to find the answer, but I couldn’t. Finally I said, “Okay, never mind, one week.” Then as I was breathing suddenly the answer came, there was the wanting to breathe. I saw it so clearly. The intention. So one week of investigation to see that because there is the desire to breathe, breathing is happening.

Yogi: I am sitting with a lot of unpleasantness. And so I ask the question, what is this? And there is no answer, just unpleasantness. It’s partly aversion, but I just have to keep sitting with it. That’s all I can do. There’s nothing else.

SUT: Now you are gathering data. When there is enough data the mind will come to its own conclusions. The question is always to generate interest, not to get an answer. We only ask the question to enable us to observe, we don't ask the question to get the answer.

Yogi: How often do you ask the question?

SUT: You have to use your own experience and all your own understanding, everything you know about life psychology, the Buddha-Dhamma, whatever, to ask the right questions. When there is interest you may not even need to ask a question, because the mind is interested. When the mind feels dull, disinterested, sleepy, bored, when it feels oppressed and so on, then you know wisdom is weak, you might want to look at the arsenal of wisdom you have and check which is the necessary one or ones at that time.

If you are interested in meditation, the Dhamma, its benefits and all, you've got all this experience in your life through the Dhamma, then the mind will naturally seek to find its way.

Sometimes my teacher would come into the guided meditation sessions, he would just ask one question and leave. [Laughter] I was left there struggling on my own with the question. Of course my teacher didn't really mean for us to think about it, rather to investigate that idea or whatever he had introduced.

Awareness and No Awareness

Yogi: It seems that in the absence of awareness life still goes on. [Laughter]

SUT: [in English] Yes!

Yogi: My question is, when there is no awareness, whatever happens—namely the actions, non-actions, behaviour, interactions with the environment—is that all mechanical because there is no awareness? Can Sayadaw say something on what really happens when there is no awareness?

SUT: When there is no conscious awareness it's not that there is no awareness. Throughout our life we cannot not have awareness. If we didn't have awareness we wouldn't know how to walk. So there is awareness in every moment of life, but it's not strong and it's not conscious.

Because it's not strong and it's not conscious, and there is no conscious continuity or acknowledgement of it, whether we

have wisdom or not sometimes seems incidental. Some people naturally have more, some people have less.

The less wisdom we have, the more mistakes we make in life. There are people who have good intentions but they are chaotic so they don't have much awareness and they make more mistakes. It's not that there is an absolute absence of awareness.



When there is a lack of awareness, particularly of wisdom at a very gross level, life can get very bad. People kill other people, people end up committing serious crimes. The consequences can be very severe. The defilements, when they arise, can go unchecked and become very extreme. That's a possible consequence of having less awareness, and even less wisdom.

There was an incident in Burma. This man would have chilli every day with his food and one day there was no chilli, and he was so angry he got up, took a piece of firewood and hit his wife over the head and she died. Just because of chilli...

SUT: [in English] No awareness!

At that time the mind was completely blinded so there was no control. Ordinarily when we're walking around there's some awareness, we are not completely without it. For example, we might walk along lost in thought, but we still walk straight, we don't fall down. Sometimes we might kick a brick and fall over, but not all the time.

All the functions of mind know how to do their own work. Awareness, perception, all that is at work and it does its own work. As much as it is able it will allow us to function normally.

Yogi: So there's some measure of awareness...

SUT: Kusala (wholesome, skilful) minds have awareness, wisdom minds have awareness. Akusala (unwholesome, unskilful) minds do not have awareness.

Unskilful minds don't have awareness as a concomitant. All skilful minds have awareness as a concomitant.

Yogi: But say animals, you know when you watch a cat watching a mouse, timing its jump, there's awareness.

SUT: You can say attention, it's not **sammā sati** but micchā, wrong attention. It's like going fishing. People who fish or hunt are full of awareness, but it's the wrong motivation for being aware.

When I was practicing in lay life and the awareness, samādhi, wisdom, concentration, and all that got better, one day a memory came back to me of a time when I was on drugs.

I remembered that episode, everything I had said, what I had thought, the resentment, everything that had happened in the mind. The attitudes, views at that time, how I had lied to my father, the trickery... I saw everything. I remembered it all clearly. But I also saw clearly that in that state at that time I did not have any awareness. I just did what I did. I was intoxicated.

In that state of intoxication there was no self-reflection. I thought about it, I was so intoxicated at that time that I didn't even know myself, how could I remember everything I had experienced? And it was because **saññā** (perception) had done its work. It retains everything, it's just whether we are able to access it or not.

Yogi: My understanding is that either there is mindfulness or there is no mindfulness. There are no degrees of mindfulness, no halfway measures. This is my interpretation, and I'm seeking clarification on that. Also, how to recognize the distinction between mindfulness and no mindfulness?

SUT: Theoretically, mindfulness is sati. Sati is a **cetasika**, a mental condition, a mental concomitant, it's a quality. Every mind is made up of different qualities, cetasikas, and in every wholesome mind that arises sati will be present.

If you think of mindfulness in this way, sati is always present in a wholesome mind. In an unwholesome mind, sati is not present. It is also only in a mind that has sati, therefore a kusala mind, that ñāṇa (wisdom) can also become a concomitant. So a wisdom quality in the mind can only be in a mind if sati is also present.

We are born with either with three roots or two roots. The three roots are non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion. It is possible for someone to be born without the third root, 'non-delusion'. In this case that person cannot develop great wisdom in this life. But if you're born with all three roots, and generally everybody in this kind of situation is, then sati will be present in the mind, because that person has the non-delusion factor.

We call wisdom and sati latent factors, latent conditions of the mind, but you don't know to what degree they are developed in each mind. For some people they might be quite developed, for others not so developed. It's in this life when we practice that we can develop those qualities, so that they become more present conditions in the mind.

You asked about mindfulness being present or not. Everybody has some awareness. Everybody. However, whether wisdom, which is the framework of understanding that supports the

awareness, the view through which the awareness works, is present or not differs in people. Someone who has been exposed to the Buddha-Dhamma would have that view through which they see things with awareness, that view is paññā, wisdom. Whereas somebody who was not exposed to the Buddha-Dhamma might have awareness of themselves, but the view would be quite a different view.

For example, in Malaysia I asked, do you know when a car passes by? If you know the car has passed by, does that mean you have awareness? Yes, there is awareness, but what kind of awareness? The quality differs. Anybody would know that a car has passed by (or some other experience) but how do we know that we have experienced something? It's through the sense doors.

We see, hear, and feel. After then we give meaning, we interpret. Then we name the experience. Yes? Everybody has this kind of awareness. They get to the point of giving meaning, so they know their experience. That is normal awareness.

But someone who has been exposed to the Buddha-Dhamma also knows the functions of the mind, that this is what the mind has done, what it has experienced. The mind has experienced seeing, hearing, and the mind has given it meaning. That's the difference: the view and the wisdom, the understanding.

First we need the theoretical knowledge and the understanding that every experience is a combination of two

parts, the object and the mind, the known and the knowing. When you have that understanding and you practice then you see an experience as what is being known and what is knowing. These two come together and work to give you the experience of awareness.

Otherwise, we're simply aware of the experience and its meaning, that we have experienced something without understanding the process that leads to that experience.

Yogi: Do these sense doors have any role to play in the coming-about of that awareness? Or is that awareness, that wisdom, quite independent of the role that the sense doors play?

SUT: All the various sense inputs give rise to consciousness, what we call eye consciousness, ear consciousness, et cetera, just bare consciousness of the experience. But not recognition of the experience, what we would call sati.

Whenever there's sense contact, a consciousness arises, a sense consciousness is already known. It's when we become conscious and recognize that this consciousness of seeing or hearing or whatever has arisen that sati happens, that's what we are calling sati, and that is what we want to develop. That is weak in us, we don't have this recognition of our experience as it happens.

There are degrees of mindfulness, as in the strength of your mindfulness, how present your mindfulness is, how much it manifests in your mind, how much more or less you have it in

a day. There are those degrees of mindfulness. In the beginning, we just try to use as much awareness as we have, and then we take the knowledge that we have learned from books and teachers, and we try to be mindful with it.

As we practice mindfulness, our understanding grows, our own understanding about what we're experiencing, about how



we're practicing and how our practice affects our experience, and so on. When these understandings grow, they become part of the support for our mindfulness.

And then when there's some of our own developed wisdom supporting our awareness, you can say that the awareness is stronger. The process continues, you continue to be aware in that way, the momentum grows, and you learn more lessons.

These lessons then become part of your developed wisdom, which makes the awareness stronger. So there's this momentum that carries itself over and over again.

If you sustain your practice over a long period of time some of this developed wisdom becomes really innate, it becomes your innate wisdom, and then you'll notice that whenever you have awareness, all those things that you understood yourself have become the lenses through which the awareness sees. You no longer have to call them up or remind yourself; they are the way that you see things.

Choiceless Awareness

Yogi: My approach to practice is a choiceless awareness, I'm wondering whether I'm supposed to have objects or not supposed to have objects. I can't imagine not having objects.

SUT: There is always object, it's impossible for there not to be an object. So long as there is mind, there is an object that the mind is paired with.

Yogi: When you have a primary object, like the breath or something, everything else becomes secondary, there's already a choice there. So it's not choiceless awareness. Choiceless awareness is that everything is equal.

SUT: Choiceless awareness is only equal in the sense that all objects are allowed to become significant but in any moment

some objects or the other will become more significant than others before they become less. So choiceless just means that you personally don't make a choice. But naturally something does become chosen, something does become known more clearly than something else but you wouldn't call it primary or that it wasn't equal or something like that. It's just that you know it and then you know something else and then maybe you know the same thing again.

For example if we chose to start by putting our attention to the breath, that's our choice. And then you might notice some sensation on your arm and that is choiceless, but now that has become significant.

Yogi: So it doesn't need to be sustainable over time. It could be changing really really fast. And then if it's maybe more settled then it's possibly not changing this fast?

SUT: That's right. It doesn't matter whether it's changing fast or slow or it doesn't change for a long time. You just know that. And if you know that it's changing, especially when it's changing, if you recognize that it's changing. Even if we just move, physically if you move, there is change already.

Concepts and Reality

Yogi: I was thinking about when I'm sitting sometimes I'm not looking outside but I can still see the lights, the texture. I'm not looking at objects just interested in how the seeing is taking place. And the same with hearing, sometimes not hearing any particular sounds, just almost the silence, the lack of sound. Does greed and tension also come at the same time as a sense of being outside of the sense door?

SUT: Yes, concepts... more concepts. The feeling of being outside means the mind is paying more attention to the concepts rather than to the reality.

There are six types of concepts: direction, shape, colour, time, place, and name. So when we think of something as associated with somebody, a person, the concept is already there, a name. That's why when I say object, I say 'that which is being known', that's why you can know a sound, or you can know

there is no sound, but that's also an object, because you know it.

Once I was somewhere in Burma and at night in that area there were a lot of cicadas, you know these loud, burring sounds, and they just filled the air, and they don't stop. And that was the loudest thing, the most significant, so the mind was just aware of that. Aware that this is the object, this is a sound.

And I was paying attention for quite a long time, and then the mind noticed that besides the sounds of the cicadas, the rest of the atmosphere was silent. So there was not only the sound of them but there was also the silence beyond them, and I could know both at the same time. So then there's the knowing of that... there's not only two objects but there's two minds that are each recognizing a separate object.

Generally we are so attracted to the strong object, the gross object, so when there's pain, we know there's pain. When there's no pain, we think there's no sensation but actually that is something too. That's why sometimes to know that something is an object you have to understand that it's being known, and therefore it's an object. If you know it... That comes from understanding the subtle is also known although it seems like you're knowing nothing.

Reality is always paired with the concept that we lay over it, but the reality of the concepts that we usually know has to be understood. It has to be understood that the reality is present with the concept. So reality is the object of wisdom.

On its own, reality is abstract, so it's very hard to get a grip, that's why you can only understand reality, you cannot see it, or experience it. You can understand, you can understand the principle because it's abstract, but when you want to get a feel of what it might be like, Venerable U Jotika has this metaphor: he says the concept (and for us our experience of reality is always through the concept) is the hook, when you know the concept, the reality is already there with it, it's just for us to realize what the reality is.

For example, when there is sound, sound by its nature is Paramattha, it's a reality, but we only know the concept of the sound, we don't know the reality of what the sound is, its characteristics, nature, and so on. We don't know the reality, we know the concept.

It's the same with when we use the words arising and passing away when something appears and disappears, we see the concept of it but we don't understand the reality that things are impermanent. It doesn't hit us, we don't realize it just because we see something come and go, we see the concept, but that doesn't mean we understand impermanence.

Very often yogis try to look for impermanence, they try to see things arising and disappearing because they think that will help them to realize impermanence. But seeing something arises and passes away is just an experience—conceptually you've seen something but it may or may not give rise to an understanding into the nature of impermanence.

Greed also knows when something comes and goes—we see some food disappear and we want more! We can also see the concept.

Yogi: As we see something, the moment we notice that there's a colour or a shape or anything, I mean it happens so fast, before you know what, you're looking.

Interpreter: Yes, the concept's already there.

Yogi: Yes, so we have to be really watchful of that, seeing becomes looking before you know what.

SUT: Like in everything else, we can't force the mind to see the reality of the sense that you are observing. So initially you can just allow yourself to recognize that much, and then as the awareness and everything gets better, then at some point the mind will realize what sight is, the reality of sight, apart from the concept of it.

If we can know the mind that is knowing, if we have that, then because the mind that is knowing is always simultaneously paired with the object that it knows, if we then have a handle on that, we come closer to what just the object is.

Say we try to remove colour, shape, distance, all these things from sight—what would be left behind?

Yogi: Sight, I suppose? The moment you feel, we perceive, almost instantaneously then it goes into...

SUT: But concept is not a problem. It is okay to know a concept, you can know that the mind is knowing a concept. You must recognize what is creating concepts: perception is. That's again seeing the mind at work. So you need to recognize that, rather than fight it. There are very few people who actually recognize perception is at work.

Yogi : For me at this point of the practice, to build continuity has to do with consciously preferring experience to concepts. That the big draw is to go into conceptual thinking. And the awareness is in the experience. And so to keep making that...

SUT: That's fine. The natural tendency of the mind is to go into the concepts because of delusion. Because that is the defilement that knows concepts. Defilements believe in concepts and delusion believes in concepts. But as we continue practicing the mind begins to realize the experience itself, the reality of the experience, which is paired with the concept, and once you begin to see that bit, you have to direct your mind towards it, because the natural tendency is to go to the delusions, concepts. So reminding is good.

We see, but the tendency is to immediately see the person, the wall, the chairs. Now we see, we also see the concept but we

remember to notice that we see before then going to the concept.

Although it is necessary to look at the concept, we need it for survival and so on, but you recognize the seeing first, the sense of seeing. That's what the Buddha means by appamāda, not forgetting Nature, that means not forgetting reality. We never forget concepts, it's automatic.



There are three sets, three kinds of objects and three kinds of minds. Defilement takes concept as its object. Wisdom mind takes reality as its object, **vipassanā** wisdom sees reality, **Paramattha**. And the **magga ñāṇa** and the phala ñāṇa takes nibbāna as object.

The mind always takes the object that matches its qualities. If there is a lot of concept that the mind is taking, then more delusion and defilements are likely to arise in the mind. When the objects that the mind considers are more about the realities of things then more wisdom is likely to be in the mind.

We need to look at things, when we walk around we need to look, we need to listen. Remind yourself to know that you're hearing and listening or seeing and looking before just doing the activity because it brings that wisdom in. It allows that wisdom to have its place first before dealing with the concept. Although you are now looking at the concept, the understanding that there is a natural phenomenon at work is also there.

Is it because we look that we see? Or is it because we see that we look? Looking is intentional, yes? Is it because we look at, for example, the glass, that we see the glass? Or is it because we can see that we can look at the glass?

Yogi: The second.

SUT: Because if we were blind, if we couldn't see, we couldn't choose to look.

[in English] The attention goes to listening because we cannot see.

If we can't see we can only listen, we can only choose to look at what we can see. If we couldn't see in the first place what

would we choose to look at? Wisdom understands that seeing is happening. Greed only sees what it wants to look at. The greed is always looking for what it wants and then it chooses to focus on that, it doesn't see other. It only sees what it chooses to.

SUT: Now when we think, 'What is this?', we think of the concept. In the practice when you ask, 'What is this?' you want to pick up the nature.

Yogi: I didn't understand that 'you don't think of the concept, you think of the nature'. What does that mean?

SUT: Nature is the reality of your experience. What is being directly experienced. So maybe there is touch, there is seeing, there is the not understanding of what this is. So, the reality of the experience.

When we say 'What is this?', maybe when we are thinking, 'What is this?', we are not interested in what we are thinking about, but recognizing that there is a process happening. We are interested in the process. What is it that is happening, that's what we are interested in.

Yogi: **Ānāpānasati** is towards concept...

SUT: Right

Yogi: And yet you just said concept equals thought, usually thought is concept, and yet you just said concept is delusion.

SUT: The relationship is not exclusive, all defiled minds have concepts as their object but not every concept gives rise to a defilement. So it doesn't work the other way, it works this way.

SUT [in English] Every defiled mind pays attention to concept but not every time you pay attention to concept is a defilement. **Samatha** practice is all concept but those are wholesome states not unwholesome states.

Yogi: So you can pay attention to a concept with a knowing and non-defiled mind, in the correct, wise way.

SUT: Yes. When there is understanding, the wisdom of what a concept is, you can take a concept and defilement doesn't arise. That's why you don't remove concepts, you don't try to have no concepts. Concept is not a problem, delusion is the problem. So you remove the delusion about what a concept is.

Yogi: The four elements. Can you see the heat in your body? Can you see the water element? Can you see the wind element?

SUT: Actually all we can know is the elements, we can't really know the body. We can only think of the body but we cannot experience body, we experience the feeling of the elements.

Yogi: Is what we feel real?

SUT: What you can experience directly is reality. That's why we can't eat chicken...

[in English]: Sweet you can eat, chicken you cannot eat!

Interpreter: You don't eat food, he says, you eat softness, hardness... What you experience directly. Taste...

SUT: [in English] You don't eat banana, you taste, sweet. You don't eat vegetable, you eat sweet or sour... [Laughter]

There are people who eat something just because of the idea that that is good. For example, one yogi told me she likes vegetables, and I said, 'Why?' and she said, 'They're good for my health.' So long as it's vegetables she wants to eat it.

They think that vegetables are good for their health so when they see vegetables they are very happy and there's a lot of greed. And when they see meat they feel aversion, you know at the dining-table queue.

That's why some Brahmins in the Buddha's time said to the Buddha, "Do you eat disgusting food?" And the Buddha said, "No." The Brahmin spied on the Buddha and saw him eating meat and leapt out and said, "Ah! You're eating disgusting food!"

And the Buddha said, “That’s not what I meant by disgusting. It’s when you eat with greed, aversion, and delusion that it is disgusting.” And that Brahmin became enlightened.

Whatever we eat, if we eat with greed it is disgusting. Even if we eat vegetables with greed.

Yogi: All the time, that’s what we’re doing...

SUT: There’s this practice of eating food that is not cooked, ‘free of fire’. My teacher used to say the fire on your stove won’t do anything to you, it’s the fires of the defilements that will get you.

Death

Yogi: It's my understanding that an enlightened person who dies is out of **saṃsāra** and he never comes back. I've also heard that if you die consciously you don't come back, because you died without fear, mindfully. Wouldn't it be easier than enlightenment to learn how not to be afraid? [Laughter]

SUT: As far as I know, in Buddhism as long as you don't have the wisdom to stop the cycle of saṃsāra, you will continue in the cycle of saṃsāra. Even for an enlightened being, not to enter saṃsāra again you have to be an arahant, a fully enlightened being—not a stream enterer, once-returner, or non-returner, they continue in saṃsāra until they become fully enlightened.

Being fully conscious and unafraid when you're about to die is an ideal situation. It won't necessarily get you out of saṃsāra, not as far as the Buddhists say, but it does give you a peaceful death. It means the likelihood of going to a better life, another

human life, a better life, a life where you are able to practice Dhamma is greater.

The thing is about not fearing death. If you've done a lot of unwholesome actions in your life and there is no wisdom that understands anything about it, fear will arise. When we are dying, they say images of our life flash by us. When we are near to death we also see images of where we are going, and if we are going somewhere unwholesome fear is bound to arise. The practice of mindfulness is very important at that time.



Delusion

Yogi: How can we identify the defilement of ignorance?

SUT: Delusion is clearest when you are able to recognize wisdom because delusion is so different from wisdom. So when you recognize some wisdom that you have, you also recognize the delusions that would have been there if it were not for that wisdom. It can be simple things, for example in the present moment if we don't understand something, there is some delusion in the mind. You could call that quality delusion. There are varying degrees of delusion.

When you have an insight, things feels very clear. What has become clear feels very clear, and in that moment you are aware of what was not clear before. And so while clarity is a quality of insight, doubt and confusion are qualities of delusion.

Yogi: I am able to check for any craving and any aversion that I can find in the observing mind, but I am not so sure about delusion. Sometimes I feel dull or as if I am thinking in a smog, I am not sure if this is delusion or ignorance.

SUT: Confusion and doubt are delusion in the knowing mind. Being lost in thought is also delusion because there is no knowing mind. Laziness, sloth and torpor, which is what you talked about just now, doubt and confusion, wrong view, all these are delusion. Sometimes the mind believes that what is right is wrong and that what is wrong is right, this is also delusion but it is slightly difficult to identify.

It is right to check the quality of your mind all the time. We check to know the five faculties—awareness, effort, stability of mind, faith, and wisdom—although we often do it almost unconsciously. Mostly we know the first four quite well: we know when we are aware and when we are not aware; we know when we are putting in effort and when we are not putting in effort; we know when the mind is stable and when the mind is not stable; we know when the mind has faith and confidence and when it does not. Our greatest failing is to recognize when we have some wisdom and when we don't.

When I ask yogis questions about whether the five faculties are present, they are generally able to recognize whether the first four are present or not. But when I ask, "Did you have wisdom?" then either the question is too broad, or they are

not really sure if wisdom was present and, if so, what kind of wisdom.

One kind of wisdom that we develop through the practice is knowing how to be skillful with our own practice. For example, the realization that greed cannot help to progress the practice will naturally lead the mind to give up the greed to achieve something in the practice. That's wisdom that has developed in the mind and that makes practice more skillful. If there's real understanding of the futility of using greed to practice then the mind will never want to try to do anything with the practice. It would be artificial.

Yogi: Is **avijjā** caused by the hindrances?

SUT: I read the following in a **sutta**: Why is there dosa? Because there is lobha. Lobha causes dosa. Why is there lobha? Because there is moha. Delusion causes lobha.

My simple understanding of why there is moha is because there's not enough wisdom. But in that sutta it says there is moha because the **nīvaraṇa** (hindrances) are strong. Then it asks why the nīvaraṇa are strong, and it says because duccharita (wrong actions or inappropriate behaviours) are being practiced. So how do you reverse it? Do wholesome deeds, then your nīvaraṇa will be less, the mind will be more pure, there will be less moha, and so on.

Dreams/ Sleep

Yogi: Would there be an explanation why would someone have a dream, the same dream, for years on end?

SUT: The mind is interested in it, maybe intrigued by it, attached to it. Attachment happens because of various things, not because you just like something but also if you are afraid of something or you dislike something, there is attachment because of that emotion, so for whatever reason the mind is attached to something that can recur over and over again.

SUT: My teacher used to ask me to check when I wake up in the morning whether I remember the last thing in the mind before I fell asleep.

To do that you have to be mindful throughout the day and then sleep. And one day you'll wake up in the morning and remember what you thought before you feel asleep.

There was one yogi who tried to do it for a week and got frustrated because he couldn't. If he tried to be mindful when he was sleeping he couldn't sleep, and when he relaxed the mindfulness he fell asleep. [Laughter]

How do you know you're awake? What wakes up first, the mind or the body?

Yogis: The mind... Mind... Hmm... Awareness.

SUT: So you know when you're awake. Usually it's because the mind knows something, the mind knows an object, that's why it feels it's awake.

We often wake up to an alarm or a bell or something like that. Does the alarm wake us up? Or are we already awake, and that's why we hear the alarm?

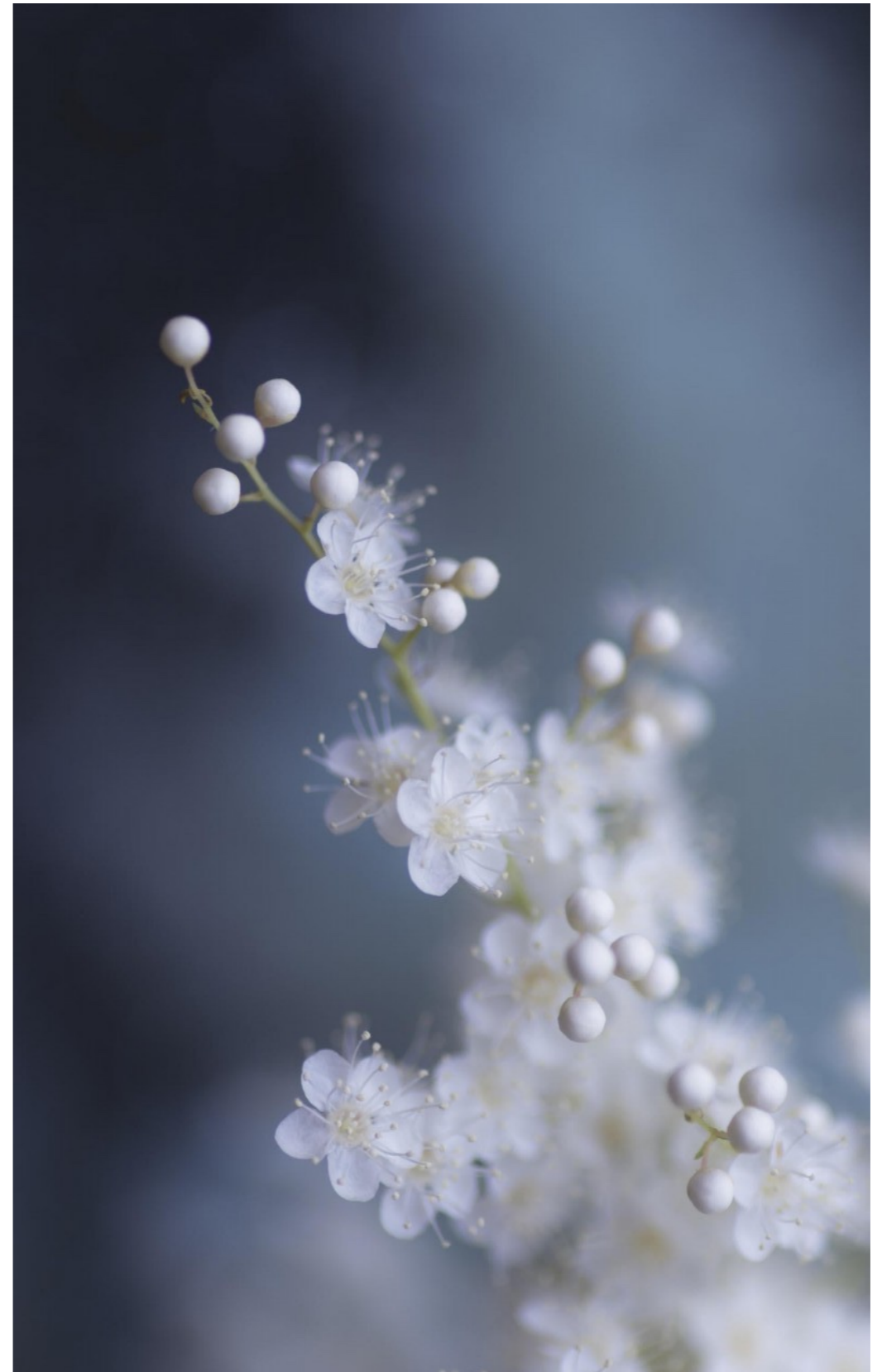
Yogi: I think we're already awake because sometimes when we're so tired we sleep through the alarm and don't hear a thing.

SUT: You can all check yourselves.

If we're curious then it makes us aware because we're trying to find out. So we'll also learn to balance our awareness, so that we're not too peaked, so we don't have too much energy and at the same time not-enough-awareness.

I'll give you a hint. We don't awaken suddenly. We gradually awaken. Particularly when we're in retreat, we are aware of states of half-awakeness. In the ladies' quarters there are always ghost stories because in these half-awake states the women meditators want to wake up, but when the mind is so asleep it can't wake up, and they think something is holding them and pressing them, and then they come up with ghost stories. It's usually in half-awake states, they frighten easily.

So the mind awakens slowly. When you are meditating and you're being mindful and falling asleep, you will notice yourself drifting into sleep and sometimes you hear yourself snore and wake yourself up again! [Laughter]



Drowsiness/ Dream like states

Yogi: When I sit for formal meditation drowsiness often comes very quickly. It's a bit better if I keep my eyes open. But I'm wondering whether it's better to do mainly walking when I want to do formal practice rather than forcing myself to sit on the cushion?

SUT: Whatever makes you more alert is better. And then when you feel better from your walking, when there is more elasticity in your awareness, alertness et cetera, then you can test yourself on the cushion and investigate. You can then investigate what got into the mind that made you sleepy. When the mind is sleepy it means that the mind is not working, it's not interested. If the mind can work it won't get sleepy.

That's why I say always to watch the mind that is aware, that's the mind that is working to do the meditation. Because if we don't watch it we don't know whether it's really doing its

work, what it's like while it's doing its work. We think it's doing its work but we don't know, maybe it's not, we're not really sure... and then it stops working. Also, if we eat too much we get sleepy.

If we use too much effort to be aware we run out of energy and cannot put in any more viriya and the mind becomes sleepy. If we lack interest we become sleepy. Lack of interest shows a lack of wisdom and skilful means in the practice, that you're not really interested in the process. If you're really interested in what's happening one hour can feel like just a few minutes.

Yogi: I've noticed that it happens almost within a few minutes of sitting down—

SUT: Too much quietness. Even when at your normal movements you're walking slowly. You like the quietness too much. Too much samādhi, no balance. There is a lot of samādhi but not enough wisdom and viriya. You might want to walk faster.

Maybe it's your personality as well. Maybe you're generally calm and not excitable. If you do things a bit more energetically the mind will be more alert. The moment you sit, it's calm. Even in the walking make sure you watch the mind that's aware. Is it working? How is it working? How is it aware? Keep an eye on it. See whether it's energetic. When you keep your eyes open remember to realize seeing is an object as well.

The best thing would be if we had a swimming pool. Swimming meditation: you can swim slowly but you keep moving. I always has this dream of making the monastery into a kind of factory: the yogis would have jobs, not just yogi jobs, but jobs like assembly line workers. Or maybe you would have a project to do, you would have to be mindful. That would be your mindfulness practice.

It's very natural, when the mind has a job to do, a natural job, and then it has to bring in mindfulness. Then the mind is really busy because it has to try very hard to do the work.

That's my personality. I like to have something to do. When I was young I used to do two things at the same time if possible. For example I would always have the radio on to study. The mind is very fast. We can drive, listen to the radio, talk on the phone, and eat—all at once. We change gears, put on the brakes, and stop at red lights—we can do all of it!

Yogi: Sometimes when I am meditating I suddenly get into these dreamlike states. It's exactly like a dream but I'm awake so I pull myself back. What should I do when I get into these dream states happening during sitting meditation?

SUT: You are probably going into these daydreams because the mind is not interested in the present moment, it's not interested in the work of mindfulness. So the mind is doing

the work of being mindful, of being aware, but maybe a little bit blindly. It's just doing the work but there's no purpose in it. It's good to remind yourself of what the mind is doing and why. Sometimes when I give reminders in the hall, I say to people, "Are you going to be aware or are you just going to indulge in what you are feeling?" Be careful really to be mindful and not just mechanically mindful.

At the Centre I once asked, "Do we realize that peace is also a kind of dukkha?" One monk had been indulging in his sitting sessions and got a bit alarmed and thought I was talking to him. I was just asking if we understood that peace is also dukkha but the monk felt guilty and he wondered if I had read his mind!

Sometimes we are paying attention but we're not really conscious of the awareness, we might be paying attention but we're not awake and alert. There might be some sati and samādhi and the mind might be quite stable, but there is a lot of delusion. This is when we get into these states.

When we recognize thought we need to remember to recognize that thought is an object, that thinking is an object, and that this is the mind. If we recognize the story when we are recognizing thinking, then we get sucked deeper into the story.

It is vitally important to understand what an object is: whatever we know is an object. Remember this and recognize it. It makes meditation a whole lot easier. In Pāli it is called

the **ārammana**, the object. There is the knowing and there is the object.



Dukkha

Yogi: Today I went and took a memory, an experience, a vivid pleasurable experience and played it back. Because after having read about the fact that happiness is dukkha, it depressed me. [Laughter]

So I decided to go and experiment with a very pleasurable experience to see what it did, and I enjoyed it. And then afterwards I walked out of the hall and I went to sit down and then I got a slight sense of not quite as, you know, as happiness. It wasn't unhappiness, it was just a slight sort of heavy sense. But I think it was just coincidence, or it was something else. Obviously I can't understand at this level, but what I'd say is has Sayadaw done the same experiment with a pleasurable experience?

Interpreter: I think we misunderstand dukkha.

SUT: Dukkha is probably not correctly translated as suffering. We only understand dukkha-dukkha, we don't understand the other two, which is not feeling suffering. Because we only think of suffering in that way. If we translate dukkha as suffering, that's all that comes to mind, this emotional suffering. A real understanding of anything, when it's an insight, any insights frees us, makes us feel more free. So if we truly understood dukkha, and that's supposed to be an insight.

People come and say they want to practice because they want to be happy. I feel a bit alarmed because they only understand pleasurable, emotional happiness. They don't understand jhānic happiness or the happiness of an insight. It's a different kind of happiness. I sometimes say to the yogis, "Don't want to have happiness. If there's less suffering that's enough."

I'm talking just about a general thing that the mind does. When it thinks of pleasure it wants it, then it tries to pursue it with greed. So they might do that for the practice of meditation, they might try to pursue it with greed. They think it's going to give them pleasure.

Every moment is new

Yogi: If you're going along on the path and able to see and understand more, then any time, any moment, every moment is new.

SUT: [in English] Object is new, reality is new.

Interpreter: But it doesn't not have history. Every moment is new, but every moment is a legacy of the past.

Another Yogi: Causes and effects.

Interpreter: Because it's cause and effect. So it's new in the sense that this is a brand new mind that has arisen, but it's still holding everything—

SUT: Everything it is now is born from the old mind. It may have one or two things added in this moment.

That's how we can make our practice stronger. That's how the Buddha became the Buddha. He put in his practice over eons and that power grew and grew in the mind.

Even though every mind is new, it's not empty. New doesn't mean empty with potential to be everything again, new means that it has brought everything in from the past, and it has the potential to be everything, but how do you use that for the next moment? It's got all the old habits, conditionings, good and bad, already inside it.

Some of you know Pāli so you will understand. There are two kinds of wrong view, *uccheda diṭṭhi* (annihilation view) and *sassata diṭṭhi* (eternity view). Believing that once this life ends, it ends and it's over, or believing that it will go on and on and on, heaven is forever.

It is somewhere between the two. When one mind is finished, it's finished, it's over. But there is a cause and effect chain. So long as there are conditions for the chain to link one more time, another new mind is born. It's new, as in 'this particular mind has never been born before', but it has been born from the old and therefore carries everything from the old with the potential to be more.

Through this string of linking chains the idea of the first mind, 'this is me', is passed along to the next mind. And so the next mind thinks 'this is me', and it passes it along on to the next mind. As long as there is no condition for that chain to stop, and because that chain has been going on for so long, we think

‘this is me’. We think this process of mind is me, and then we think it is a spirit or soul.

There are people who think of it as ‘after this life it’s over’. And they say, “The next life is another person because I don’t know who was there in the previous life.”



Yogi: What happens when the mind gets quite neutral? I can observe the object. If heat comes up, I observe the object and then I try to observe the awareness. But then as I observe the awareness of observing the mind is just quite neutral. And it stays like this many, many times. It’s just like what this gentleman said, we become lazy sometimes...

SUT: The mind’s tendency is to like new things, it wants variety, it wants freshness, otherwise it starts to feel lazy or bored. One thing to remember is that no moment is the same as the old. Every moment is fresh.

Also recognize that every moment is changing. When we recognize the changes in what we are experiencing that also helps us to keep the pressure. Although it’s neutral, it’s changing. If we think ‘this is still happening’, with the idea that the same thing continues to happen, then that’s wrong view already. We believe it’s the same thing but we’re not observing properly and seeing that every moment is fresh.

Fear/ Projection of mind

Yogi: In the Dhamma Hall I heard this noise of groaning and I thought someone else was doing it, and then snoring. I waited for quite some time thinking, why is this person not waking up? And then suddenly I realized it was me! [Laughter]

SUT: I have had people who thought someone came and sat beside them and heard that person breathing, when it's actually their own breathing. Somehow the mind projected an image that projected the sound out of themselves. And some people get afraid, they think a **deva** came and sat beside them, or a ghost came and sat beside them, but they are just hearing their own breathing.

There was one man, he was really afraid of ghosts, and one night he woke up and he heard dogs howling. Then he started to feel anxiety and fear. He heard this loud breathing, and it felt like it was coming from far away, and he heard this breathing coming up the stairs, and then coming closer and

closer, right up to his door—and then he realized it was his own breathing! [Laughter]

The mind projects. And then believes it's real, and because it believes it's real, it becomes afraid and believes some more... So when we don't understand the nature of the mind and there's too much samādhi, and we don't understand what samādhi can do, we don't have enough knowledge, then we scare ourselves silly!

Yogi: I had an experience on my last retreat here, it was a big wake-up call. I was being mindful, walking to my car in the dark to get something out. And I walked back being really, really mindful, and then I heard this person and they were coming towards me and they were going to mug me, and I looked around and fell straight into a bush and broke my toe—a reminder of that for months to come. But it was actually a huge, great kangaroo! I was being so in-the-moment walking and then this thump-thump-thump! And... actually nobody saw me I don't think but I went head-first into one of the bushes!

SUT: The mind takes whatever information it has and perception goes to work and makes an interpretation, and this all happens so quickly. The problem is actually the thinking about what it is, the believing, and samādhi makes it more believable. Samādhi always magnifies, exaggerates, makes

things feel more lucid and real. The defilements too. When you put samādhi and a defilement together, a defilement like fear, and well, that's a sure...

Yogi: So is that why when we're being mindful, when a defilement comes up, it's like whoa! Much stronger.

SUT: It feels very clear and very obvious because samādhi is there. One of my experiences, I was just waking up, so I was half asleep, and I could sense this agitation in the mind. It was a huge sense of agitation. Then I was watching it and then I began to awaken and then I became fully awake.

Once I was awake and I was fully aware of the agitation, it had become very small. And the reason for this is that when I was fully awake the five other sense doors, the physical doors were at work, so there was a more complete picture. When I was half asleep there was only the mind door. The mind was more sensitized, so it just felt like it took up the whole space.

When we're just waking up we mostly just know the mind door, and then when we're more awake we start to take in the other sense doors. Some people have these experiences of awakening twice. They think they've awakened in the dream, but they're still in the dream, and then after that they finally wake up and realize that all of that was a dream.

Focus or Bird's Eye View

SUT: Do you have your feet on the floor or touching something? Do you feel hardness or softness?

You know, when we're given instructions and we're told, 'when the feet touch the floor, know the touching,' that's what we make our goal, and then we don't realize the other things that could be experienced. We just think 'touching,' we don't think specifically anymore, we don't feel any of the other things that are there any more.

Your skin is soft, but the floor is hard.

We have two eyes, why do we only see one picture?

Interpreter: Scientifically it's the brain that puts it together.

SUT: Don't focus, just sort of blur your sight and it will become two. It is because we focus that we see one picture. If we don't focus there are two pictures. The mind is so fast. In one split second it knows so many things by itself.

We can know hearing and seeing at the same time, yes?

So when we stay with the object, when we are trying to see the object, we don't notice what's happening in the mind, we miss so much because everything is happening in the mind. But if we stay with the mind we see everything that the mind is doing to experience things. And then you see a lot of ... the work of knowing the object, naming the object, remembering the object—all these things are being done by the mind.

Yogi: It happens so fast there's no time to catch it.



SUT: It's only because our awareness and our wisdom are not quite there. When we are so focused we are targeting something to know, rather than trying to find out 'what can we know?' If we don't focus then there's a broader perspective waiting to see what might come into relief, into your perception. And if you continue to notice like that, if you continue to be aware of things in this way, this awareness will grow, this being able to know becomes stronger and stronger.

Then slowly all the stuff that's blurred initially when we're 'just knowing' becomes more and more clear because that knowing is getting stronger and stronger.

So when you are able to know like that and you try to focus on one object at a time, then you know how much tension there is in trying to focus on objects rather than just know what the mind is doing.

We really need just to be able to naturally know what the mind is doing naturally. Then our sense of the fact that this is not a personal process, that 'I' am not in charge of this, even the meditation, that the mind is doing its own work of being aware, and everything becomes more clear, more obvious.

But when we put in effort to focus on an object or whatever, the sense that I am doing it, I am the meditator, I am making effort, I can see, I have experience, becomes very strong. Actually it is just nature at work, that's what we need to realize. It is knowing, it is realizing, it has experience, it is happening.

Yogi: Where do those concentration practices come in then, on an object in your practising? Isn't that a main part of spiritual practice? Concentration on an object, or isn't it with vipassanā?

SUT: For beginners that's a practice, start with one object. Because they don't know what to do so you get them to focus on one object so that they know how the mind is working to know. But once you can know that then you can try to know other things, try to know the mind itself.

It's just for us yogis, we follow what we're taught, and most of the practices are teaching us to focus on the object, and that's what we do. The Buddha taught many, many methods of practising, and there are the practices that go from the object and there are the practices that go from the knowing.

Yogi: Maybe about fifteen years ago I was doing tai chi. And as I did it progressively I became short of breath and I had to keep on panting. And after that I was telling my husband maybe there's something wrong with my heart. So he took me to see the cardiologist and the doctor said nothing wrong. Then my husband told me, "I think you don't know how to relax." I think that is quite a big problem for me when it comes to meditation, so can Sayadaw please advise me?



SUT: When I went to Hong Kong, a lot of the yogis do tai chi in the morning. I would do tai chi with them. I loved it! Every moment there are so many things to be aware of at the same time! You can't focus.

If you're moving like this, what can you focus on? But you can know both at the same time. That's perfect for vipassanā! You move the hands and the legs at the same time and you can know it all at the same time. Awareness is already doing its work, you're aware, you can't focus too much, so you relax.

The reason you're getting short of breath when you're doing the tai chi is because you're using too much concentration. You're trying to pay attention to all your movements with too much intensity all at the same time and that's why you're getting short of breath. So the thing is to realize that you don't need to pay so much attention.

Like yoga as well. It's always a co-ordination between the movement and the breath. Some postures, as you move into the posture you breathe out, and as you move out of the posture you breathe in. But if you just stay with the mind, you'll be aware of everything you're doing. You're aware of the movement and how you have to breathe. But if you try to pay attention to the movement, to the breath, one at a time, you'll probably forget to breathe while you're moving and things like that. But if you don't try to control those things and you just stay with your mind, just know yourself, then everything just happens.

Yogi: Isn't it that mind itself cannot be aware of many things? You take one thing, one thing, one thing... You cannot be aware of hearing and seeing. You hear and then you see, it's like a movie, a sequence.

SUT: When the mind is very strongly focused on the object, yes, you cannot take more than one thing at a time. Then it's like a sequence, one after the other, after the other. But like I said just now about looking and seeing: if you look at this recorder, and you look very carefully, that's what you will see. But if you notice, there's actually all the peripheral vision. But you can choose to focus in on it completely, and then you can choose to go from one object to the other, to the other, and not acknowledge everything else that's in your vision.

Or you can relax and not look at anything and you can see all three recorders at the same time. Or everybody else in this room. Nothing is distinct, but everything is seen. The mind is just like that.

The mind is like a river. When you look at a river it's like a body of water and that's what we think the mind is. But if you look into the water, it's trillions of droplets of water, or molecules of water.

There's so many layers of mind working simultaneously. And the mind is much faster than we can describe.

Yogi: But the knowing itself is happening in one distinct moment. It just appears as 'simultaneously' because it's so fast. Isn't that right?

SUT: Correct, yes.

In theory mind arises one at a time but experientially it's impossible—because a trillion minds happen in a second, so how can you know one at a time? Only the Buddha can experience that. But we are not Buddha.

SUT: Some of the theory in the abhidhamma explain about mind, but not all of it can be experienced practically. And if you try to experience it practically in that way... because you have already taken the wrong idea—you're saying you can see one mind at a time, one experience at a time—but that's already a very gross moment with billions of minds that have already happened and you think you've only experienced one

thing. So it's very important not to get the wrong idea of what your experience is.

A very famous example of this sort-of not being able to 'do' the theory is paṭiccasamuppāda. The theory of dependent origination.

So it's a cycle that's described, where something leads to something, leads to something. The beginning is delusion, which leads to this, which leads to that... The Buddha saw the cause-effect chain but there are different kinds of causes and effects. A cause doesn't always happen before an effect. In reality causes and effects arise together.

You can understand something from just observing. When the mind has gathered enough data it just understands the process but it's not like you split it into atoms.

So in this chain of things, you can only see that because delusion is the beginning, in the moments that there is wisdom, that's when the chain is already broken and the escape has happened, but it's not like you can go in and fiddle with the thing.

There are many ideas that are explained but we can't try to practise every theory that is explained to us. Some things have to be understood in context.

Formal practice/ Retreat/ Daily Life

Yogi: If what we need to do is be aware and practice awareness from moment to moment, and just do this, why do we come to retreats if we already know what we need to be doing?

SUT: Retreat is for practice, you have more time to dedicate to this exclusively. The practice gets stronger. The second thing is you have a teacher, you can learn more. Maybe you are off on a wrong tangent and they can set you right.

Yogi: So it would be good to do as many as you can?

SUT: If you have the time, why not? [Laughter]

When I started practicing in lay life because I was depressed, it's true I was already skilful at the practice, but I didn't have time to go to retreat anymore because I was running a business. So I practiced every day, very dedicatedly at home, and then I would go and talk to my teacher maybe once a

month, twice a month. When I had the time I would go and discuss with my teacher.

But my retreat was at home. Home was my center. The coffee shop was the Dhamma hall. [Laughter] The wedding hall was the Dhamma hall too. I would have to go attend weddings, in Asia somebody has to attend weddings to represent the family.

At first I hated it. 'So many people, I want solitude.' Then I began to see, this is aversion, it's **dosa**, so I challenged myself. And then I remembered my teacher's instruction: you're not supposed to remove the object, you're not supposed to develop aversion because of the object. So if I could go to that environment and maintain the awareness, and not become averse, I had won the challenge. That was how I took it. I even went to a boxing match.

Yogi: Sayadaw is telling us to practice awareness in our everyday life. How much importance does he give to sitting on the cushion?

SUT: I sit about twice a week. When I was in lay life, I would sit once in the morning and once at night. But in between throughout the day I would take every opportunity to be in myself quietly. Sitting for me means being with myself quietly.

Maybe I would be sitting in the market, maybe I would be sitting drinking coffee in the coffee-shop, when I wasn't interacting with customers and I was being by myself, those were all minutes of being by myself, those were all minutes of sitting. Basically I just never let the mind be free. I gave the mind work to do. To let the mind be free at that time was very dangerous.

The moment I wasn't aware, the mind would start thinking and then I would get depressed again, and then I wouldn't know where the problems were starting... If I let the mind be free, not be mindful, if somebody came with a problem I would just explode because I couldn't deal with it. Because I was depressed everything would frustrate me, so I had to keep myself ready all the time, always mindful. When I was physically idle the mind would be busy, keeping watch.

Yogi: How did Sayadaw develop the desire to do this?

SUT: **Pāramī**. That was also an insight.

I started trying to practice continuously because I was depressed. I already knew how to practice. I didn't really believe that it would work on depression because I was so depressed I didn't think anything would get rid of it. But I knew it gave me some relief. So I practiced just because it offered some relief.

And then, after I had been practicing for a few months, one day I had an experience when as usual I used an inhaler, you know, a Vicks inhaler, to bring attention sharply to the breath

—I would have to use that, that's how scattered the mind was because I was so depressed. That day, I took a breath, I was aware, and then for a split second I felt free. That feeling of depression completely lifted. Right after it came straight back. But in that split second the mind completely understood, this is the way to go, to end suffering.

After that the **samvega** became very strong. The faith in it became very strong. Then I began really practicing.



Yogi: I find when I'm trying to be mindful during the day at work, I get quite absorbed in what I'm doing and then I find that I'm anxious. It's that intense involvement in what I'm doing, the mind gets some tension and it becomes aware.

Something I get absorbed in it and find that I lose track of where my mind is.

SUT: When you are aware do you tend to have more awareness of your physical movements? Is that where most of your attention tends to be?

Yogi: No, it tends to be more in my mind, on what I'm thinking about, and certainly on emotion.

SUT: If you are able, stay more with the mind, not just with the states of mind but particularly with the awareness itself. If you can be aware of the state of the awareness then, because everything else is being watched out of that window (and this takes a little practice because you have to start to recognize the signs in the awareness that you're starting to get involved, the quickening of the mind, the mind starting to get in a hurry, intentions)

Yogi: Yes, I notice those things. Oh, okay, and then you think, "Ah, I've been so concentrated..." I'm hoping that more mindfulness will help me to become more aware and get on to it earlier, before it becomes a problem.

SUT: There is nothing more you can do. Some things have to take their natural course and become part of the mind's habits. Don't rush it. Stay with the mind, begin to know your intentions, your feelings, motivations, and all. If you are

aware of the awareness you not only know what is happening in the mind, you also know what's happening in the body.

[in English] Because mind, awareness, and object are together.

Yogi: Say, if you're thinking about something, maybe focusing on a logical problem or making a detailed plan or something, should you also at the same time be aware of some part of the mind? Is that not taking away from the power of the mind, by focusing on a problem?

SUT: This is something that comes with skill—skill meaning lots of practice. Initially, of course, yes. When we put our minds completely inside us we can't concentrate on things outside, and when we put our minds completely outside we can't really be aware of things inside.

So in the beginning we might not be able to do it when we need to concentrate on something like work, a problem, or a logical thing. But what we do is to practice outside of that, whenever we can we practice, and that momentum builds up. Sometimes we find that it sort of kicks in naturally when we're doing something we're really absorbed in, it (the awareness) just sort of comes in, and that will start to increase as long as we keep practicing consistently.

When you need to do a piece of work, just do it. We have to allow ourselves to do the work fully. But in the times when you're able to practice more freely, if part of the practice is to know what's going on in the mind and how the mind is doing things, 'oh the mind is thinking about this so it can do that', 'oh the mind is thinking in this way', when your habit is to notice the mind functioning or the mind at work, then you'll notice that when you let yourself do some work—because it's a



habit of the mind to recognize itself doing work—it will sort of start popping up. You will be doing something where you concentrate and you will sort of notice it is doing it concentratedly. It will just come in naturally. But you have to allow that to happen.

When we have a consistent practice that constantly reminds, remembers, and knows the mind at work, then it gets to the point where it becomes effortless, because it becomes so familiar with itself, so intimate with itself. It always is with itself and it likes being with itself. That's when it allows the mind to do anything because it doesn't mind, it's always with itself.

That's why the Buddha said to practice constantly, continuously. The word used is continuously. And although in the beginning it's difficult, any amount of effort we put towards developing momentum makes it more effortless and continuous in the future.

There was a yogi last time I was in Perth who asked a question about this, and at that time I said, "Do it 50-50." That yogi was a psychiatrist so he started thinking about what I was saying, and thinking, 'How do you measure?' [Laughter] So he asked, and I thought about it and realized, it's not so much 50-50. Basically you allow the mind to do its work naturally. And if it's very practiced then the knowing of itself also happens naturally, at that point you're one hundred per cent on your work while the other one does its own thing. [Laughter]

Greed, Attachment in the Practice

Yogi: This is something that's very tricky, we find a way in meditation that works and we want to make it a system, and then the next time it doesn't work.

SUT: It's because we don't understand all the cause-effect relationships in the first learning and then we just want to get that result again without really realizing what the factors were.

The understanding that greed doesn't help the practice is a lesson we will have to learn over and over and over again.

When we haven't learnt a particular lesson thoroughly we will come across it over and over again. That's why the first book is called *Don't Look Down On The Defilements, They Will Laugh At You*. We sort of kick the defilement out of the ring once and then we think we can do it again.

Yogi: And it gets subtler. Initially it's quite gross and you notice, 'Oh yes, that got rid of it!' And it feels like, 'Oh! That was easy.' But I've found that the greed gets subtler, for instance—

Interpreter: It's trickier. You can't recognize it.

Yogi: No, I didn't recognize it. I thought I was just going to be really mindful on this walk. But then when it didn't quite work out it was like, the greed was subtle. I hadn't realized that the trying to be mindful on the walk had actually come from a greed perspective.

SUT: It's very sly and will come from all angles. Once you recognize it at a gross level it will then come at a subtler level. And then when you recognize that, it will come at a subtler level, at a different level... Different angles. [Laughter]

There was a monk who had got into a good momentum. He came and said, "Oh, if it carries on like this then I don't ever have to stop meditating. Every-thing is going fine, awareness is continuous, and it feels effortless." He just had to put in minimal effort to keep it going.

The next morning he came and said, "I don't know what happened. I don't know how to practice any more. It's all gone." [Laughter] Something had spoiled the mood and he didn't know what.

When you have a good experience always check how the mind was meditating before that. What did it do? What sort of

attitude did it have? All that. When you have bad meditation, also check, what did the mind do? What sort of attitude did it have?

We learn from each of these things over and over again. When we haven't learned, our meditation goes up and down, good-bad-good-bad-good-bad. When we learn the peaks become less and less high and the troughs less and less low. We really understand.

We can sort of gauge how skilful we are at our meditation by how high and low we go. The less skilful, the more high and low you go.

It's very important to know, to understand, particularly, what the conditions are for the results, the causes. Defilements always crave a result. They want to get something, a certain way. But wisdom always thinks of means, not the end. Wisdom looks at what can be, what conditions can be fulfilled. What causes are needed to fulfil the conditions.

Yogi: So is it also fair to say wisdom looks at the process?

SUT: Yes, right. Particularly when you're understanding that every cause has an effect. The understanding that if the conditions are fulfilled, if the causes are fulfilled, the effect cannot help but take place.

There was a yogi who worked very hard and he seemed to hit a brick wall every couple of days. I would try to help him work through different techniques, try it this way, try it that way.

Everything he did, initially would be really good, it would get really good, and then he'd get really bored.

It took a while to realize what sort of circle he was spinning. He was a perfectionist and so after working simply at it—in the beginning he thinks of it as, 'I'm a beginner', so he would do it simply. But after a while when he would get quite good and think 'now it can get really much better'. And then he would start to think of what it 'should be' and become impatient with how it was at that moment, because he wanted to get it right away.

He'd gone to many places to practice. He couldn't stop practicing meditation but he kept coming up against this brick wall. Afterwards he understood what was in his way.

Yogi: This expectation thing is so subtle. You don't realize that it's there sometimes.

SUT: For the long-term meditator this is the main demon. You know, there are the ten contaminations of vipassanā insight. And the first nine are experiences that we have in vipassanā practice, like seeing light, feeling light, understanding clearly. All these sort of good experiences. All of them are valid vipassanā experiences. What makes them contaminations is when we attach to them. We give them greater meaning or significance than they actually have.

Yogi: I remember one story about Jack Kornfield. He was in Ajahn Chah's monastery and then he went to Mahasi Sayadaw's place. And he was there for six months, a silent retreat, everything went well. And then he came back, he was really excited to explain his practice to Ajahn Chah, "It's great over there!" He said he could see every tiny muscle in his feet when he walked. Like he was so mindful. And Ajahn Chah just said, "Great. More things to let go."

So it sounds like some people get attached to these kind of things too. They just keep on knowing, knowing, instead of letting go.

SUT: Yes, that happens. We need to begin by knowing, but not hang on to it. What Ajahn Chah meant by 'letting go' is letting go of the sense of ego that 'I' know so much. 'I' have had such an experience. But not to let go of the knowing. You cannot let go of the knowing, but let go of the attachment to how much I know, the sense of owning that experience. Every moment is gone.

[in English] Already gone.

It's not the knowing we have to let go of but the defilement. We get self-satisfied in our practice, or get conceit or arrogance and so on with our own practice... However, the more we can know, the better. We already lack knowing.

It's possible for a yogi to become very attached to.

Yogi: Or get excited about.

Interpreter: Excitement brings some sort of attachment. There is a feeling of elation about it.

Grief

Yogi: The thing I am sitting with, particularly on retreat, is grief. And it's a grief about the environment and how it's changing because of climate change. I'm not sure what I am asking Sayadaw, maybe just if the instruction he's giving there is similar appropriate for my situation too?

SUT: Understand that the grief comes from a feeling of loss, it's dosa, therefore try to see the corresponding 'what is it that the mind wants?' that's causing it. We have to try our best to mitigate unnecessary loss, but in the end, the last resort is again uppekkhā. When you can't help it, you have to accept. Because loss is natural. Loss is part of nature, we have to come to terms with it. Our whole lives are full of one loss after the other. We are losing every moment, it's nature.

When I went to Europe the car got stolen, and my luggage was in the car, so I lost everything: I had only the robes I was wearing! They came into the room, they took the computer,

the camera, the car keys... When I thought of the luggage and everything I had in there I only felt loss for one thing, a book in which I'd been writing all the ideas in it for two years at that time.

The mind kept saying, 'It's gone! What a loss!' And of course I noticed every time, and then the mind would complain again, 'It's gone! What a loss!' It happened once... twice... by the fourth time, another mind said, 'It's gone. Why do you keep going on about it? It's happened already!'



Yogi: I can really relate to what the other yogi said. Because one can deal with personal loss like that and go through all the stages, but when it's a universal loss, it's much harder, I think.

SUT: There is nobody creating this loss. It's the defilements. It is not a person who is damaging the environment, it's the defilements. When we don't see the personal, we will have less defilements towards the phenomena that are at work. When we think somebody is doing it, we will feel angry with those persons. Because there is delusion, that is why this is happening.

There are seven billion people in this world. What percentage do you think is wise and what percentage is deluded? [Laughter] That's what the Buddha said. The answer is clear.

Yogi: So we just change ourselves and don't do anything about it?

SUT: Do what you can but you have to accept what you can't. Acceptance.

Honesty

Yogi: It seems like we all have blind spots and it's often easier to see other people's blind spots than to see our own. How do we bring more honesty to our own practice?

SUT: Think of it as not enough understanding. We haven't been able to see that view of ourselves. It's like a lack of skill, a lack of ability to see. We're able to recognize those defilements in ourselves that we have the ability to see, and then there are subtler levels that we haven't quite got a grip on yet.

Yogi: If you have a very good dhamma friend, you can invite them to tell you.

SUT: Even the blind spots that others see in us are still quite gross. At that level, yes, somebody can tell you about some behaviour of yours that you never thought was unwholesome but that annoys people, or something like that. But that's still gross. There are subtler things that neither they nor you see. We can become able to see them.

For example, yogis practice meditation, yes? And they don't really know the motivations that they bring into the practice, why the practice becomes better or worse, things like that. But as a meditation teacher watching the mind for a long time. I know the patterns of the mind. So when a yogi comes and says, "Oh, my practice is not good," I already know greed or something was at work.

Sometimes it's difficult to point out to the yogi that they have that motivation or defilement, or even wisdom, in their practice. Sometimes we don't even recognize our own wisdom.

Interpreter: This always reminds me of something that happened at a centre in America. This lady was talking about an experience she had had. She would try to practice at home, but when she came home she would be tired. She said she tried to be aware of the tiredness, but that it was hard because she was tired and it was difficult to be mindful. I was translating this to the teacher and I said, "She said it's hard, she's tired, she's trying to be mindful."

And he said, "Tell her to stop trying to make the tiredness go away." And I said to Sayadaw, "She didn't say that." Sayadaw said, "Tell her to stop trying to make the tiredness go away." I couldn't assume that this was what the yogi was trying to do because she hadn't said that. And I was like, "Wait, listen to the rest." Sayadaw said with more irritation, "Tell her to stop trying to make the tiredness go away."

Then I said to the lady, “Are you trying to make the tiredness go away?”

And I told the yogis about this exchange. I said I couldn't assume that that was what she meant. But Sayadaw already knew that was what she was trying to do. That's why she found it difficult to try to be mindful all the time.



‘I’

Yogi: Whenever I check, there is apparently a person here, I fall into thinking much more easily in walking meditation on retreats. And the thinker seems to be the same ‘me’ over and over. I wonder why it happens more easily on retreats? As if I’m more close to it or something. I think I’m aware, but then actually the awareness has turned to me, who’s turned into a thinker, and... again...

SUT: Actually it is a recognition of the reality of what’s happening—there is a delusion that I am the thinker, but in retreat because you’re observing it you’re actually seeing that delusion, whereas at home we’re not even really aware that we’re thinking. It’s just a difference between lack of awareness and awareness, that’s all.

And now that you recognize the delusion that ‘I am the thinker’, imagine if the sense that ‘I am the thinker’ loses itself, imagine if... because you’re observing it suddenly the

mind sees that there’s just thinking and no thinker. Because you’ve been seeing it, the difference will be so obvious to you.

Yogi: There are moments when it seems—I guess afterwards—I go, “oh, there’s nothing there,” like a shock.

SUT: Yes, it’s always like a shock. There are people who cry.

Yogi: Actually some fear generally.

SUT: Yes, because you feel like, “what do I do without me?” We rely on this ‘me’ so much, this idea of myself [in English, “No me, no I, how to stand?!”]

Wisdom and delusion are opposites. We all want to understand Dhamma and then sometimes we understand it and then it frightens us! We don’t want it to be like that... But it’s only initially. Initially, it’s always a bit of a shock. After a while you get used to it and then you accept everything for what it is.

Our old view, our old way of seeing things, it doesn’t really want to accept that it’s not that way. There was a bhikkhuni who had a startling experience of the sense that there is no ‘me’, and she had a very strong one. To talk to me about it, she couldn’t talk, she was so sad, she just cried and cried, she couldn’t bring herself to speak about it because it was so... Nothing to hold on to. Just when she thinks about it, the memory of the realization of it...

So at the time she had the insight, it was very real, she knew that it was true, but once the insight had faded, the old “me’ is back and it doesn’t want not to be there and it fights.

Yogi: I studied quite a lot with Western Buddhist teachers and often they talk about self-compassion or mettā toward self, to allow space. I really like some of the teachings of relaxing the mind and relaxing the body.

SUT: It is the same, being kind to yourself, just relaxing. This heart-mind is very important. It has to be relaxed, at ease, and comfortable, then it can do its best.

What we call ‘me’ is in fact this mind. Rather than say there is no ‘I’ maybe it is better to understand what exactly we are calling ‘I’. We call the mind ‘myself’, ‘me’, and we use it. We use the mind to do so many things but for convenience we call it ‘me’ or ‘I’. So we need to know that this process exists; if ‘I’ was not there this process would still be there, and yet we call this process ‘I’.

We think that the ‘I’ exists, that it’s real, but it is the process of mind that is real. What we call self is an idea, but the idea is not real. It is like a distortion of view, like seeing something on the wall from a distance and thinking it’s a nail, but when you come closer you see that there is no nail. There was never a nail there in the first place but from a distance we thought

there was. A concept is like this: from our point of view we believe that it exists, that it’s there, but it’s just a construct of the mind.



Yogi: In Sayadaw’s writing he talks about wisdom coming forth? It’s like wisdom knows the way through, he uses the abstracted form of the concept, rather than ‘your knowing’ so that—

Interpreter: So that we always realize wisdom is wisdom, and not my wisdom.

SUT: Yes, that's right. The Buddha described it that way. For example, with the mind and the greed that arises in the mind, recognize that greed has arisen in the mind. He describes it like that.

When the understanding that it's a reference becomes very, very strong, whenever you use the word 'I' you feel very conscious that you've used the word and that it's not really indicating yourself, that it's indicating some quality. When we speak, the words we speak very often indicate what lies behind, what colours our view.

Yogi: Is this referencing of the 'I' and the understanding of the 'I' as a concept, as a reference point, an essential part of a **sotāpanna's** understanding?

SUT: For a sotāpanna it's already understood. The sotāpanna understands clearly that the process of mind and matter is not a person, and because the sotāpanna understands this clearly he uses the word freely without ever feeling that it's a 'me'.

When I was practicing at home, around the time I agreed to get married and during my wedding I was being mindful all the time, particularly during the wedding, I noticed how many 'I's there were. Every time I saw the mind think 'I', it felt very loud and very prominent because I could see how much the mind believed it, feeling that 'my separate life', was beginning because I was going to get my own room. It was alarming.

Intention

Yogi: We're told to watch for intention. Sometimes, if I'm mindful while I'm eating I can watch my intention to go for the food. But when I'm in sitting meditation what are those subtle things you watch for in terms of your intention? How can it be seen? Is it just greed? Or being aware of greed or being aware of aversion?

SUT: It's easier to know intention when you're moving. During sitting meditation yesterday I said intentions are in the whole body, we're full of these urges to do. I introduced that so we might notice when there was an urge to do something in some part of our body.

When we're going to do a gross movement of course it's very obvious. But we can notice it when we're sitting as well. If you can see the mind you will see those intentions.

I had told one yogi to go and find all the intentions possible. The yogi was sitting in meditation, he couldn't find any intentions to move. But this yogi was persistent. He searched his whole body one part at a time to find any intentions. Then he settled on his eyes and was thinking 'why are my eyes closed?' And then he knew it was because he had intended to keep them closed. Suddenly every other intention in the body was so obvious. He had the intention to keep his hands in a certain way, the intention to be still, the intention to keep the waist straight.

We don't realize intention continues to function when we are not moving, to keep us in that position. In every part of our body.

Breathing, always the intention to breathe. That's why I ask why we're breathing.

Yogi: You were saying something earlier and I had the same problem. Say you are reaching for something, a cup, you pour something to drink, then you pause. Is that an urge?

Interpreter: There is also the urge to be still, not just to move.

SUT: If I'm just holding a cup, I'm not moving and I'm not going to move. Is that intention? Because of the intention it remains held, so there is the intention to remain. There's energy there to keep it in that position.

The wind element is called the cittaṃ vāyo dhatu. It's a mentally produced wind element. Some people move in their meditation. When you ask them why, they say that the wind is moving them. They believe that it's the wind element so they keep letting themselves move. You have to realize you want to move, that the mind is causing movement. The body can't move without the mind.

Yogi: What controls intention?

SUT: It can be a defilement and it can be a kusala mind. And there are neutral intentions like blinking the eyes and breathing.



Yogi: In traditional vipassanā practice they talk about 'intention', but when you lift your foot and you want to move it forward, to notice the intention... Now, a lot of things happen, like digestion happens. I mean, from a scientific point of view your brain has to send a message for those things to happen. Like if you're paralysed the message to move the hand doesn't go. So is that the intention meant by the Buddha as **cetanā**?

SUT: Intentions to move and so on, those cetanās are neutral. The cetanās that cause kamma are kusala (wholesome) and akusala (unwholesome) cetanās.

The intentions that you're talking about that arise are mental formations. When intentions arise in the mind, they're just like energy. It's mental energy that gives rise to the wind element that will push that forward.

Those sorts of intentions, there's no words for them, it's not like a desire to do something where you think, 'I want to eat something'.

Yogi: Not a kamma-forming intention.

Interpreter: Yes, not a kamma-forming intention.

Yogi: So there are not really cetanās for all?

SUT: There are a lot of cetanās continuously. There's this mental energy to move. The mind is pushing every movement, and also the stillness. Intention to be still is also there. So there is not only energy to move but also to remain still. Intentions are always there.

Intention throughout the whole body just to remain seated, the intention to stay there. We are more familiar with intentions to move because the change gives us an indication that there was an intention, it's more obvious.

So long as we begin to see the mind more, there are times when we will notice these functions of mind at work. This is just one of the functions of mind. There are four **nāma** khandas. Once you are skilful at recognizing mind, then you will recognize the different functions of the mind.

Even if we just watch our bodily movements all the time, we will begin to notice the intentions that come with them as well. That's possible. When the mind is still it's easier to notice intentions. For example, maybe you're walking and then you want to change direction. When we finish a sitting session and we are ready to get up which part of the body moves first? Or is it the mind? What starts the process of getting up?

Yogis: The mind.

SUT: Which mind? What mind?

Yogis: Intention.

SUT: So a plan begins. Sitting is finished, now I'm going to get up. And then the body, some part of the body moves first. Which part of the body moves first?

Yogis: The entire body? The head?

SUT: It differs from person to person. You might want to try it out.

Some people move their eyes first. Some people open their eyes, but some people they sort of stay in that state, they like that quiet, so they move a little bit here and there.

That sort of continuity, do we know in detail how we move from one state to another? What happens first? And after that?

If we are focused on the one thing we're paying attention to then we don't really see the flow, the chain of activity. We don't know what begins, what ends. When you enter your room, does your head go in first or your body?

When you try too hard, you can't see. Just let it happen naturally.

It's only if we're really on top of the game, if we have this continuity of awareness, that we notice these funny little things. When you're not interested in what you're going to know but just interested to know, then you just stay with what you might know next.

Yogi: Is there intention even if you're asleep?

SUT: Yes, there's intention, even in sleep. Breathing throughout your sleep, intending to breathe all the time.

Yogi: So intention is not a function of consciousness?

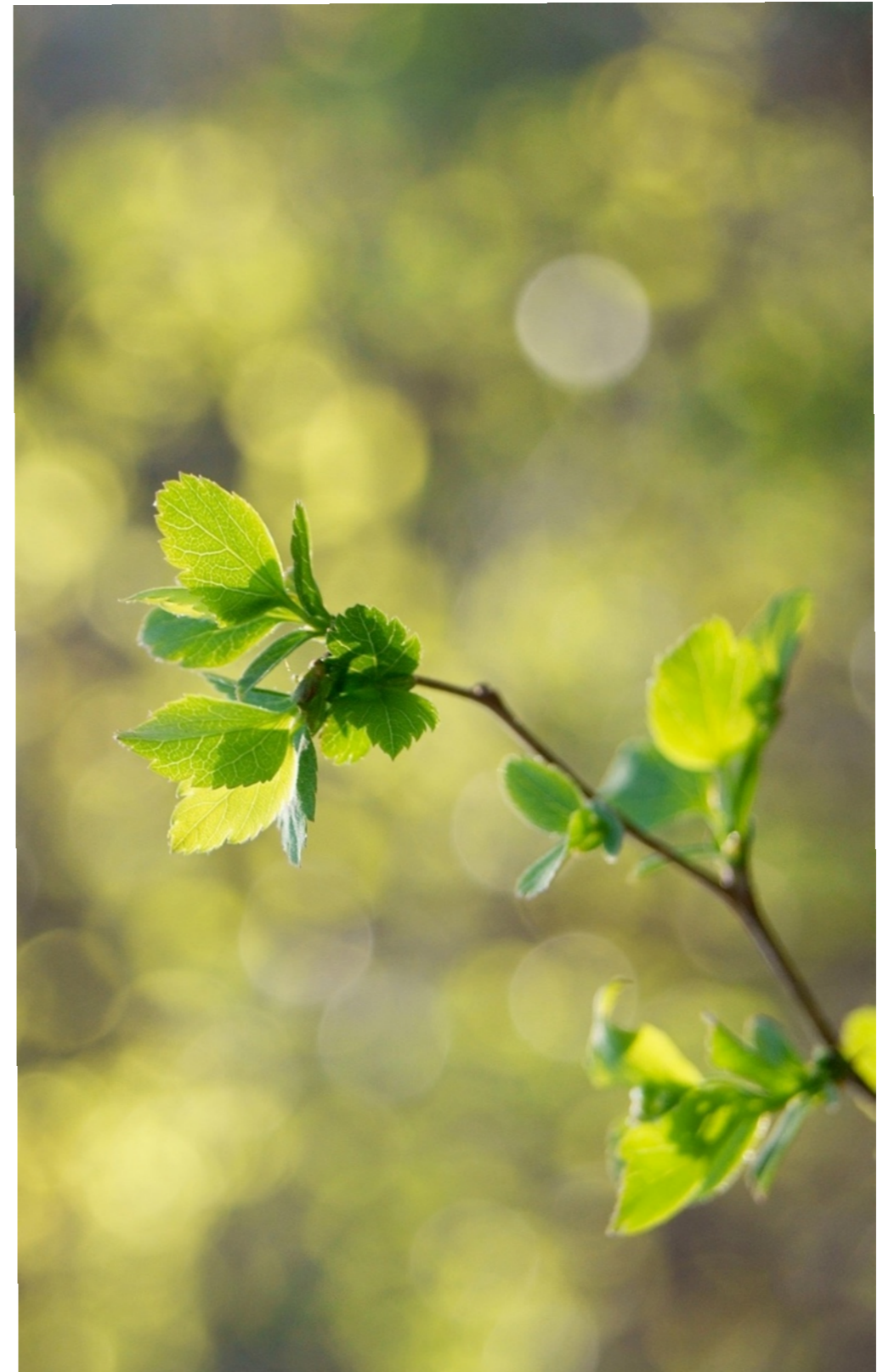
SUT: There are both conscious and unconscious intentions. The unconscious ones are very neutral, very subtle. I would say involuntary and voluntary intention. So normal breathing is an involuntary intention and a voluntary intention might be intending to inhale and exhale deeply, intentionally breathe deeply.

Yogi: And those involuntary intentions can also arise from external stimuli as well? For example, if someone is sleeping and they hear a noise—

Interpreter: Like a knee-jerk reaction sort of thing?

Yogi: That sort of thing. The whole process of perception and intention is all happening unconsciously?

SUT: Yes. But when your awareness is good you can recognize intentions at work, you can see them at work, and you can watch them.



Intuition

Yogi: Is there something happening before seeing, like intuition?

Interpreter: You're saying that you had a sense that you were going to see something and then you saw it?

Yogi: Yes.

SUT: It could be imagination. For example, somebody might imagine they're going to see a ghost and then they open the toilet door and then see a headless man there. But it's just their imagination.

Yogi: Could I ask what role Sayadaw thinks intuition plays in mindfulness and wisdom?

SUT: When there is a lot of awareness, or when there has been a lot of awareness, and a lot of wisdom has been developed, particularly the wisdom can become very detailed—it sees a lot of cause and effect, it sees the interrelationships between mind at work, the mind's functions, the ramifications of these things, it already understands how this could affect that, in different scenarios as well. Once that sort of detailed understanding is there, then you might almost call that intuition, because the mind can see ahead, it can see that in the nature of normal minds which don't have any control over themselves this is the way things tend to happen.

My teacher had this saying: “When a wise person thinks about something, it is more accurate than if you actually ran there to look at it.” It understands the nature of mind so well and the way everything interacts, you could call that intuition. It just knows ahead so clearly because it knows that this is how things work. It's not an ‘out of the blue’ feeling, but real understanding. When someone has a lot of experience then they can almost predict things in the future.

Yogi: Sometimes we are not aware where it is coming from, we just know that something is right or wrong, whether to do something or not.

SUT: Very often with that sort of thing it could just be a lack of awareness of the mind at work. No thought arises on its own, something always gave rise to it. And we might already have an understanding of the many ramifications of a particular thing that gave rise to a feeling about it, little bits of

information that we didn't even realize we had gathered, that may give rise to that intuition. The mind already has information that we may not know it has.

We don't know our minds very well or very deeply. The mind is constantly doing its own work, it might feel like intuition, like it's just come out of the blue, but at the fundamental level nothing comes out of the blue. There is something in there, a process has already taken place.



‘It’s difficult to meditate’

Yogi: Due to concentration, I get tense, other stuff might come up. What should you do in that situation? Should you just stop your practice? Change your practice? When the practice goes wrong, it’s not joyful... What should you do? The experience is all wrong... all different. The experience is all wrong. Difficult.

Interpreter: Why do you say the experience is wrong? There is no wrong experience. There’s only an aversion to an experience, but an experience is not wrong. Do you mean, if you’re experiencing something that is difficult, how do you handle it?

Yogi: Yes.

SUT: Whenever we experience something that is difficult for us to observe in a calm or neutral way, that’s when the object, whatever we are experiencing, is not the right thing for us to observe anymore. Because what it has resulted in, is a reaction in the mind that is observing, so you feel aversion to observing

this. You feel resistance to the experience, you don’t want to have the experience. At that time what you actually have to look at is the resistance itself.

So come back to your feeling, state of mind, you can check what your mind is thinking about that experience, what is your attitude towards that experience.

Yogi: So you shouldn’t back off from the practice all together?

Interpreter: It depends.

Yogi: You should still do that type of enquiry?

SUT: Yogis sometimes say, ‘It’s hard to meditate,’ or ‘it’s difficult to meditate,’ but meditation is just knowing what is happening. There’s nothing difficult about that. We can’t even help knowing what’s happening—particularly when it’s difficult, we can’t even get it out of our minds! It’s in our face. So there’s no such thing as ‘difficult to meditate.’ What is difficult is that we find it difficult to go through that experience.

[in English] We cannot get what we want.

We want to have stillness, we want to have a good experience. We don’t want to have to work through this experience as a way to be mindful. That’s what’s difficult for us, it’s not the experience itself.

Whenever we suffer we think of that as a bad experience, as not good. We want to be able to meditate on it in the right way so that we will stop suffering. In fact the right thing is if we can understand that suffering also is just an object, the difficulty we are experiencing is also something that we are knowing in the moment, so that we are in fact meditating on it.

So this recognizing of our attitude towards what we experience is very important. To realize that it's our attitude that colours, that judges this experience as bad or good, and that good or bad is not a fundamental characteristic of the experience.

For example, it's quiet, completely quiet, silent, is that good or bad? Most of the people they think that's nice. It's good. But I ask different yogis. Some people say that silence is boring. Some people say silence is frightening. It's all coloured by our minds.

There was a yogi who every time he came on retreat would start shaking. He would start getting really agitated and anxious. And the reason he became anxious was because everybody would stop talking, everybody would become silence, walking, silence, noble silence...

And it would create great anxiety in him because the memory it brought back was—he was involved in the Vietnam war and during the war a lot of his friends died. And when they had to carry the dead bodies, nobody was allowed to speak. They had to carry the bodies in silence.

Everybody was in fear because the war was still going on so everyone was very grim and silent, and when people were in noble silence on a retreat that was all it brought back to him, and he would start feeling horrible. He didn't know what to do with it.

So you see an experience is just an experience but our thoughts and our background colours our view of the experience, our judgment of whether it's good or bad.

When we practise vipassanā it's very important to recognize what view, what lens we're looking through, so that we know when it's right view and when it's not right view. Without right view, vipassanā is not happening, but you can recognize that there's wrong view.

Particularly when we're trying to deal with states of mind or thoughts in our mind or experiences, mind states that come up, if we think of the mind as “my” mind, every time we have an unwholesome mind—if we have lust or jealousy or anger—we will resist it because I don't want to be a jealous person and I don't want to be an angry person, so we resist it, whereas it's not me, it's just one of the qualities of mind.

Yogi: In that case of the Vietnam vet, how was he helped to deal with that situation?

SUT: To watch his feelings—the fear that came up, the anxiety that came up, just to watch that in a neutral way. It took a while and it helped him to not think about the story... for him it's a trauma – he had to consciously stop thinking and come

back to just the feeling, to see that the fear is just a feeling and not associated with the thoughts.

Yogi: It's natural to feel sometimes that I'm aimless, I suppose? Or it's easy to feel aimless.

SUT: When it feels aimless, give it a purpose, stick it to something, and then it will come back.



Jhāna



Yogi: Is **jhāna** necessary for enlightenment?

SUT: In the practice of vipassanā, you may or may not develop jhāna. Samādhi is necessary for enlightenment, but jhāna is

not. Jhāna is a state that is **sammā-samādhi**, but it's not the only state that is sammā-samādhi. Enlightenment is achieved when the whole eightfold path is working together—silā, samādhi, and paññā. Jhāna alone is not sufficient for enlightenment. Jhāna is a possible—but not necessary—tool for enlightenment.

Kamma

Yogi: If you're aware, can you neutralize bad **kamma** with awareness?

SUT: Nothing can neutralize the effects of your actions. If you've done an unwholesome deed, the effect of the unwholesome deed will take place. What can happen is mitigation. When you have a lot of wholesome actions, if their effects are stronger, they can prevent the unwholesome from taking place or giving fruit at that time.

Kamma is stopped or neutralized when we become enlightened. If you're a stream-enterer, a first-level entrant, all the kamma that would have led to rebirth in the lower states, the woeful states, is neutralized, but not the other kamma. For example, you may have killed someone and you will get your just desserts, but you don't go to hell. Somebody else might kill you or beat you to death or something.

We've all committed all sorts of akusala (unwholesome) kamma in our saṃsāra. As long as we work on the positive, as long as we work to cultivate the wholesome kamma, and we keep cultivating them, what happens is that the power of the kusala mind will purify the mind so it has the power to understand and become enlightened. As long as we allow this power to grow and keep feeding it we can bring it to the point of fruition. Just keep building the good.

Yogi: Something that has puzzled me was mano kamma, thinking unwholesome thoughts leads to bad kamma. Now, these thoughts come spontaneously in the head...

SUT: Somebody asked me, why is that it in the Buddhist scriptures it says if you kill an animal then you get killed in the animal lives five hundred times? It's not fair, if you take only one life why do you have to die a thousand deaths?

I explained that it's not about the life, because that's a concept. It's about the mind. How many mental cetanā do we go through to kill somebody or something? How many minds that have the intention to kill? Innumerable, right? Because in one thought moment there's a trillion minds. So innumerable minds that had given themselves to the energy to kill, the intention to kill, that's how many times it gives result.

The good thing is, it's the same for good. As much goodness as you put into any action, that's how much result will come about. And so that's the good news, it's fair.



Knowing Mind and Object

Yogi: When there is sense of greed, there is a sense of separation between myself and the thing which is desired. There's myself and there's the desired object. But when I'm listening to the silence then I don't desire the silence, but there's still a separation of the knowing mind, the mind state, and the silence... So how can there still be separation then? If I'm just with the silence, is the mind really separate from the silence?

SUT: They are separate in nature and therefore it feels like they're separate. In fact they arise together. But sometimes we will feel that there is still a distance between the knowing and the experienced object and that's because there's still some concept that's partly what you're aware of.

When we begin to realize that there is a knowing and a known, we feel they're separate. After we've known them for a long time we start to feel like they're one because in fact they

arise as one, but they have different natures. But the understanding that they're different will never go away, that they are separate, they are two, but they're one...

The same phenomenon, the same experience, whatever you call it, the same moment, it's the same mind, the same knowing, the same object, but depending on how developed your understanding is or whether some other understanding is developing, then your view of that same thing can be very different.

At the centre, and one yogi was saying that he sees that the mind and the object are separate, there's two, and I said, yes, that's correct. Then another guy says he feels like the mind and the object are one, they are arising together, and I said yes. And then another yogi piped up, "Sayadaw! You just say whatever!"

So to each his own. Whatever you understand at that moment, that's what is right for you, that's fine.

That's why when you have a vipassanā insight you really get shocked because you realize something about it that you could never imagine possible, because it's a reality.

Because our general state is delusion we always have that view, and then suddenly when the window finally opens a little bit and shows us another view, that always feels like something out of the blue, something opposite... the view is different.

There's a Sayadaw in Burma who says, don't think about a vipassanā ñāṇa, don't think about what an insight could be like, you will definitely get the opposite, because you can only think about it conceptually, it's nothing like the real thing – opposite!

Because when we don't understand we have to imagine, and we can only imagine with our limited understanding.

Yogi: With concepts.

SUT: Today during the guided meditation I kept saying, "Thinking is mind, knowing is mind, feeling is mind, intention is mind..." The reason I am saying this is so that we become familiar with this concept in order that we eventually actually see that it's mind. Now we'll see thought... we may sort of think that it's mind, but to have it hit us that actually this is just mind...

And there are also yogis who think the mind is something else, something special – that it's not this everyday thing which is with us all the time. They're looking for the mind... but...

Once somebody is looking for the mind, there's something wrong. Because everything that's happening, everything there is, is mind, and they're just not recognizing it. They shouldn't be looking for it.

How can we know it's the mind? We can only know when it functions, when it manifests itself. Unlike the other sense

doors you cannot conceptualize the mind too much, you cannot look for the mind, it doesn't have a shape, colour, sound, or anything – you can only know it by its movement, by its functions. You know this mind has happened like this—thought—so it's thinking, so that's the mind, it was thinking.

But some people are not told that this is the mind, then they think, but they don't think "that was the mind."

Hunger, feeling hungry—desire to eat. Hunger is obvious. Where does desire happen? In the mind. Where do you feel it, this desire? Is there a place for it? How do you know you want to eat? You just know... It's very different from hunger itself. But for many people, hunger and the desire to eat are one thing. It's not two different natures. Unless you pay attention to yourself and see the different natures of the experiences.



Yogi: They're always there, aren't they, both? You can't have one and not the other?

SUT: You can. You can have a desire to eat when you're not hungry. You can be hungry and not want to eat.

Yogi: Can there be something in the mind without something in the body?

SUT: Where do thoughts arise? In your head?

Yogi: Yes. They seem to...

SUT: So, is it on the right or the left side? These are the concepts! Once there's a place, there's a concept, so that's not the reality.

Some people feel like the thoughts, the mind is talking, they feel like the mind is talking somewhere here. Often we do this. So wherever we believe the mind to be, that's where we will feel like it is experienced, unconsciously.

Yogi: And we can just observe that?

SUT: Yes, yes, you can. When you are able to objectify thought, when you are able to know that thought is what you can observe, you can actually see that awareness is watching thought and they are both happening. Yes you can.

But when you are not able to remember that thought is an object, that's when the mind quickly gets absorbed in the thought and then starts... you become the thinker.

So you see, it's the difference between when wisdom is present and when it's not, when the understanding that this is the object that is being known is there, then you can see it and sometimes it slips away and then you don't see it, and you're inside it again.

So once the wisdom is not present, instantly the delusion comes back. And it becomes a person who's thinking, the story... etc etc.

When Samādhi, concentration, is strong and you have thoughts, but there's not the wisdom that knows that thoughts are thoughts, thoughts can seem very real, because samādhi magnifies things. The stillness makes everything so clear, then you might think a tiger is going to jump on you or something!

People really have had this experience: there was a yogi, he had his eyes open, he had been sitting and had a lot of samādhi and went back to his kuti and it was dark in those days and in his imagination a tiger was coming up—he was backing away from the tiger---he had his eyes open, but the imagination was so real...The image at the mind door was much stronger than his sight, his realization of what he was actually seeing.

So, when somebody develops a lot of concentration but they don't have enough knowledge about the manifestations of that, it can be dangerous because they can scare themselves. We've all heard some people have lost it while they're meditating and that's because they develop too much concentration. More than necessary, without enough knowledge and they're not able to control it, and then they get frightened by these thoughts. They start to hear things and they believe that somebody is talking to them, whereas our mind talks to us all the time, right, but it starts to become a personal thing, something personified.

Even a smell can become very real in a concentrated state. An imagined smell, we can actually smell it.



Magga ñāṇa

Yogi: In your book, you mentioned that there are defilements that have been buried for a long time and are very deep and that sometimes you need magga ñāṇa and not **vipassanā ñāṇa**. What is magga ñāṇa?

SUT: The things that are deep-rooted in our mind and are related to our life's traumas can be uprooted with vipassanā ñāṇa. But magga ñāṇa removes defilements that we are born with, like our sakkaya dṭṭhi and all that, the things that keep us going in saṃsāra. It takes away those defilements.

Yogi: How is it practiced in a simple way? How is it practiced differently from vipassanā?

Interpreter: Oh no, the practice of vipassanā leads to magga ñāṇa. It's supposed to.

Yogi: Thank you. I thought it might be purification of deep difficulties from birth.

SUT: These defilements are called **anusaya**, hidden. You can't choose to observe them because they cannot be seen. But when magga ñāṇa arises, it sees them and uproots them.

Many Minds

Yogi: What about that Zen saying that ‘when you're chopping, just chop’.

SUT: Yes, but you must be aware you're chopping. Even in the chopping, the mind is not only being aware. The mind decides where to chop, how to chop, how thin, how fat, sideways, square on, this way, all sorts of things.

What I want to say is that the mind has so much potential. It has the ability to be so encompassing. We should not underestimate the mind, we shouldn't limit ourselves with a belief that the mind cannot do something. Don't limit it.

As a metaphor for the mind: in a restaurant the manager will stand at his desk and watch everything. The waiters run around and do what they do. The customers come and sit or place their orders and eat. The cooks cook. The dishwashers wash. Everybody's doing their own jobs, they all carry on. And

everything happens seamlessly, because they each do what they have to do.

Nature is like that. All the minds do their own job. When we're not familiar we go and investigate. We're curious. ‘Oh, knowing mind works like this.’

[in English] Oh, this is knowing mind. Knowing mind does this.

And then there are other minds, like wanting mind. Wanting mind does this. When the mind feels, it will feel. Ñāna does its work. Perception does its work. All these different parts of the mind each do their own work.



In the beginning, you will take each one out and see, 'oh, this was perception at work', 'this was mind making judgement', 'that was feeling', and so on. We try to get familiar with each of them. After a while we can step away and just know. All of them are part of the experience.

When the wisdom becomes skilful at recognizing and understanding all these things are at work, then it steps away and just knows. Once in a while, you might want to go back closer in, check whether awareness is doing its work, or how perception did its work, or something like that. But most of the time, you can step back and just say 'oh, yes, everybody is working seamlessly'. When we don't understand, yes, we have to go in and look at each of them, understand how each function works.

Memory

Yogi: If the mind started to produce flashbacks, how would one deal with that?

SUT: First you have to understand what memory is. Memory is something that comes about, memory is not reliable, memory is just an image that the mind has, it's not real, it's not personal, it's not here now, so when there are flashback we can bring these ideas to the view which it takes.

There was another yogi I met who had been severely abused when he was young, and every time he went for a retreat he would tell the teacher about what he had suffered and that would help him a little bit, he would feel better, but it didn't take away all the feelings that he had, it didn't stop his suffering, he couldn't seem to get out of it.

And that particular retreat, he had wanted to tell the story, but my way is always 'don't tell the story', because the story's not

real and it's not here anymore so it's not important. And in the crowd also, with many people, he didn't say anything and I was telling him to remember that feeling is just a feeling, and an image is just an image in the mind.

After the interview as the yogi was walking back he was really upset because on retreat he is filled with all these memories already, and he was kicking himself for not telling me the story, for not insisting and telling because he was feeling so lousy.

And then somehow his mind said to him, "So what if you told Sayadaw the story. What would he say?" And once he asked that question of course the mind told him what I had said: "A feeling is just a feeling. A thought is just a thought."

Somehow, because he was being mindful and all of it just came together, and just then that was exactly how he saw it. Suddenly it was just a feeling, it was just a thought. It wasn't everything here, it was just the nature of what it was. It was as it is. And he was suddenly free, he couldn't believe it! The next day for the interview he told me this story and he was quite happy because he felt much freer than he had before.

I am trying to explain how we hold on to things, our concepts and how it affects us.

Mettā/ Karunā

Yogi: Sometimes we can generate particular states of mind, for example the **brahmavihāra**, mettā, how far is it useful?

SUT: It's useful for calming the mind. Primarily it stills some of the defilements, preparing the mind. It makes the wholesome qualities of the mind stronger so that the defilements are less.

Yogi: But it's not enough to just do that is it? If we were to just practice mettā and not actually look at what's going on—

SUT: You can make the mind that feels mettā an object of your awareness. Is there true mettā? How much mettā is there?

Yogi: But if I was practicing mettā and couldn't feel mettā because I was angry with the person let's say, to notice that too?

SUT: Yes. In those sorts of cases then it would probably be better to watch the anger, not try to blindly send mettā.

Although we consciously try to generate mettā, we are unable to because subconsciously there's so much—maybe not even so subconsciously—dosa that we are not able to still with the cultivation of mettā. Sometimes it can cause a conflict. So don't try to have mettā if there's real anger.

Yogi: The process that I've gone through with mettā is working with the neutral. Something you feel strongly about, someone you feel good about, someone you feel neutral about and then the aversion. But when you get the aversive person and you still can't do mettā...

SUT: In cases like that you can just look at the anger, not think about the person, look only at the feeling of anger. Focus on that. And as you watch it continuously and you're not thinking, the feeling can subside. Then when there's less of a feeling of anger you can see what effect it has.

You will see how the anger remains when we continue to think the thoughts that generate the anger. When we're not thinking, when the mind is doing enough work so that it's not thinking the thoughts that are generating the anger, then the anger will definitely subside because there's no generating cause. In this way we can understand this relationship.

Sometimes we don't have enough power to make the mind do more work. The anger has more power to continue to think about what it's angry about.

There is a power that builds up when we have developed a practice of focusing on one object continuously. We have the ability to focus on one thing and can build up a lot of energy in the mind in that way. When we take that kind of ability and focus that energy on to any other object like anger or pain or something, it can immediately cause that thing to subside because the mind that focuses is so much more powerful. You've built that energy from your practice.

When I was practicing in lay life, so long as I wasn't doing something actively, I kept the mind's attention on one object only, always. I never let the mind be free, never let the mind be idle. I always kept it stuck on some object to be aware of.

I used to play like that, putting five fingers together and just observing the changing touching points. If I kept the attention on the thumb then slowly the sensation between the thumbs would become very obvious and the other sensations would fade from my view. When I was satisfied I would switch fingers.

When I attended weddings—in Burma they have live bands at weddings—I would listen to each instrument individually. [Laughter] As an object. Just listening to the lead guitar, and then that becomes very obvious, so switch to the bass. I was hearing a whole orchestra but I chose one instrument to practice the power of focusing.

I didn't dare to leave the mind alone because it would get depressed. [Laughter] At that time wisdom wasn't very strong. The vipassanā insight wasn't very strong. There was no

wisdom to relieve the depression so I used samatha to still the mind, to still the defilements. There was no understanding, so I used the work I understood. I just kept the mind busy.

I always thought, how can I make the mind more peaceful? How can I make the mind still? I would practice with seeing, with hearing. I would use everything. I used a Vicks inhaler! [Laughter] Do you all know what that is? It's such an obvious object. If the mind started to get agitated I would sniff an inhaler. [Laughter]



Once I began to understand, once the ñāṇa started to arise and I understood more, that gave me some relief from the depression, and then I didn't have to focus so much anymore.

When wisdom was growing things like this happened: if something made me angry I would look at anger. Because of all the power built up, when I looked at the anger, the anger would subside. When the anger was gone I would look at the object again.

It was the same object but now there would be no anger and I would see a completely different view. That's how I understood the relationship between mind and object. And then the mind began to understand: it is possible to think of an object this way. It is possible to regard an object this way, not just with anger, but from a different perspective.

Naturally when the mind is angry it sees negatively, it sees the situation negatively. When there's no longer anger, naturally positive points of view can be seen, reasonable thoughts are possible, and it is possible to forgive. All this becomes possible when the mind is not angry. When the state of mind changes, the thoughts change.

These are principles that I learnt. I began to learn these concepts from my own experience. If I do this, it relieves the mind in this way. If I think in this way, it relieves the mind in that way. When I am agitated and have aversion, pain is experienced in a certain way. When there's no more aversion, the same pain is experienced in a completely different way.

Yogi: When I see the news, you know, people throwing stones, unrest in other countries, that sense of maybe compassion and one just wishing that something could be different.

SUT: Karunā, compassion, is not pity. Karunā is a wholesome state. When you feel pure karunā, it feels good. The energy of the mind is good. Very gentle.

Yogi: No sadness?

SUT: There's no sadness. The sadness has veered into dosa because of the lack of wisdom. There are pairs of emotions that are very similar to each other and are easily mistaken for one another. Lust and loving kindness are very close, and sometimes they get twisted. Compassion and anger are very commonly confused. Contentment and laziness, indifference and uppekkhā.

Yogi: Compassion and anger?

SUT: It's the word dosa, aversion, not anger—we always think of dosa as anger, but dosa is not only anger...

[in English]: First mind is karunā but next mind is becoming dosa...

Dosa is the wanting something not to be how it is. It's aversion. It's very subtle. So when you feel sad, you don't want something to be this way, the not-accepting is the dosa. It's very subtle.

Yogi: The near and the far?

SUT: Yes! The near and far.

Yogi: Karunā is recognizing the suffering and desire to help?

SUT: Yes, the desire to help is always a part of compassion.

Yogi: Not to dwell on the negativity.

SUT: Yes. You want to bring relief but you're not feeling sad for their state. You accept their state and you want to help.

Yogi: It can be something very positive.

SUT: It is very positive. The Buddha was the compassionate one.

A Vietnamese monk came to the centre and he went on the alms round and he saw all the poor villagers and he felt so sad for them, he was so overcome with grief for them, he couldn't meditate. He thought he had so much compassion for them, he felt so sad for them, and he couldn't meditate any more. In the end he had to take a collection and go and donate the money to the villagers and then he finally felt satisfied.

And then I asked the rest of the Vietnamese. Why did he have to do that? Why was he not able to meditate? Who was he trying to relieve?

Yogi: Himself.

SUT: If it was pure compassion then he would not have been so agitated, he would not have been so compulsively unaccepting. So there was a lot of unacceptance mixed up in what he was feeling.

The mind twists and turns us and we don't have enough wisdom. We have to be careful. When we see our own minds we can see those subtle differences.



Mind Power

Yogi: The explanation I give myself is that our mind is not contained within ourselves. That it is somehow universal. It's not just contained here, it's more than that.

SUT: Yes, the mind does have power. But it's just the power of the mind, particularly when there is good concentration and so on in the mind. But don't overestimate it, either.

Yogi: Is the mind connected to other minds?

SUT: Separate.

Yogi: Sometimes if people concentrate a lot here, someone else feels it. Is there connection at some higher level? Are all the minds connected?

SUT: They're not connected. They influence each other.

Stronger minds can affect weaker minds. Minds that are more powerful have a very powerful influencing effect on other minds.

Samādhi is a very attractive quality. When someone has very strong samādhi, you notice people want to follow them. They want to do what they say. Sometimes these people don't even have to speak, people just want to be close to them. They want to be their followers. They want to do what this person wants them to do. It's a very strong, attractive quality.

Yogi: Is it the same with mettā or people praying together? Because it's a combined energy?

SUT: Each individual mind has power, and when many people gather together to put their minds towards one object then that power is magnified.

If you come into a space where you have a lot of greedy people together you can feel the energy. If you go into a space where there are a lot of angry people you can feel the energy. It's the same with positive minds: you can feel the difference in a place where there are a lot of people doing mettā together. You can feel the difference in a place where there are a lot of people who have wisdom.

Mind Process

Yogi: I notice that there's patterns to the thinking. Sometimes I notice that I'm thinking of food and then I realize that I'm hungry. I may be in discomfort so then I might be feeling irritated, so sometimes then I notice that I'm irritated and then I realize that I'm in discomfort as well. There's conditioning of the thoughts, they're related to what's going on maybe physically, or the weather, or something like that.

There may be memory recurring but then the emotion might be that it's some sort of regret or remorse, or boredom. So I'm just entertaining myself as well. I'm very interested to know what Sayadaw thinks about thoughts, how to look at these thoughts, what patterns they have.

SUT: When you see all this conditioning, these patterns, relationships in the things that happen in the mind naturally, we begin to understand the nature of this mind a little bit more. When we're hungry we want to eat, we salivate. It's a

natural process, a cause and effect relationship. Nobody did it, it's just a natural act.

So if you see this whole process, sometimes the realization that this is a process of nature, **anatta**, can arise. You can see the desire to eat and the salivating happen at the same time. Nobody made the saliva, you can't do intentionally. It's body and mind working together as a process.

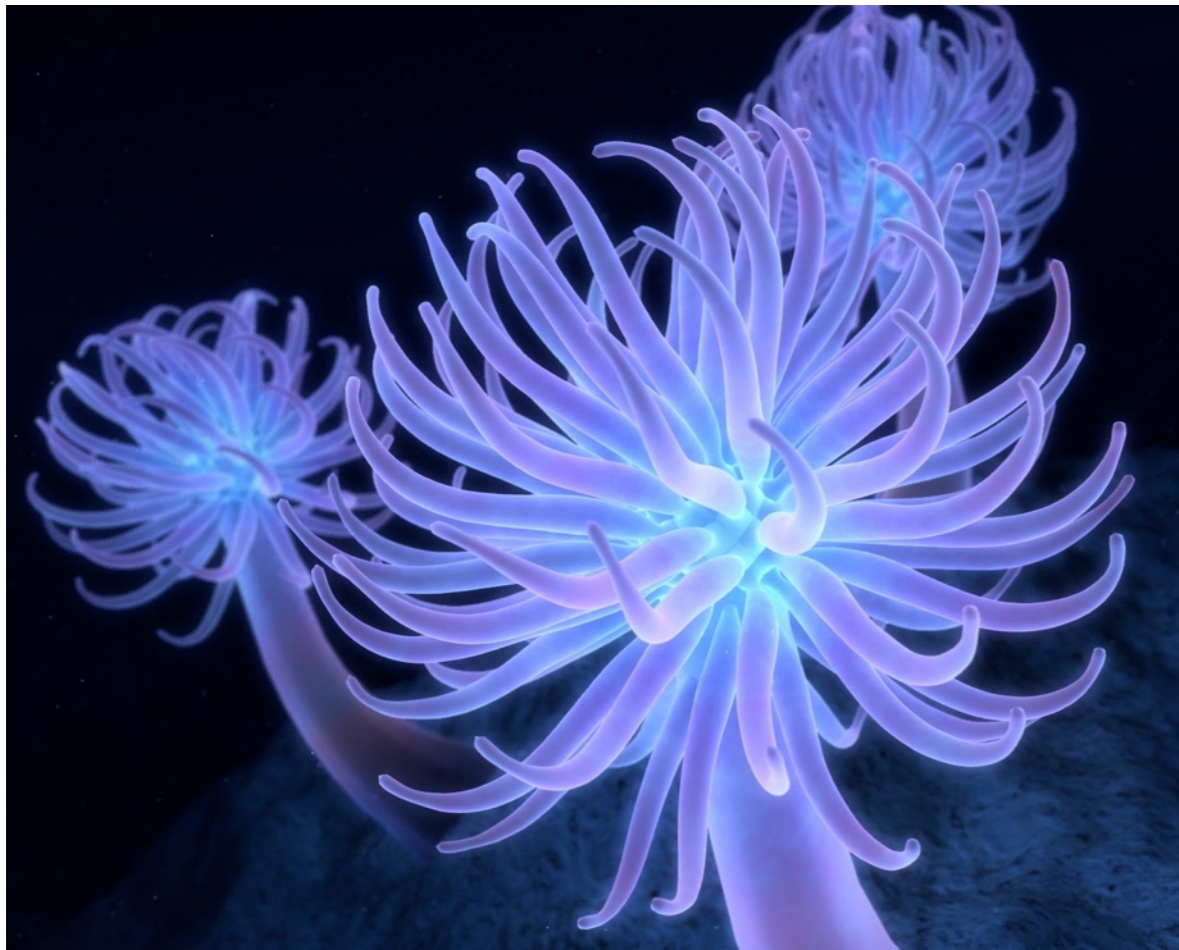
The more we see these cause-effect relationships in everything, the more we realize there's nobody there. It's just a process doing its own thing. We have these experiences daily, but we seldom have a realization that it's just cause and effect. Understanding doesn't arise when we are full of our normal defilements and just carrying on.

Yogi: How can one be aware of mind process?

SUT: The more you watch your mind the more you will slowly start to see what is behind. It takes a lot of practice, always trying to recognize everything the mind thinks and does, how it colours and shades—everything. The more you watch the more you start to recognize new, little things, more new things, and then it becomes a full picture.

For example, in our room most things are always in the same place, we are very familiar with it. Perhaps we always keep our glasses in one place. We do these things all the time and our

mind remembers them, but we are not aware that the mind has done these things. When you switch off the light you can still find your way around the room, you don't bang into the dresser or the bed, but we didn't see the mind doing all that. There must be some level of awareness that means the mind has remembered the things.



If someone is quite aware, he will know where things are in the room. And if someone is actually aware of their mind then the whole process of why they remember becomes clearer.

Because they saw the mind doing this, they saw the mind remembering things. The mind is doing this all the time.

If you are that mindful then if something new is put in your room you will notice immediately. If something is missing you will also notice immediately. And if we are also always aware of seeing, that also will support noticing whether something is missing. If we watch the mind we'll notice how, as we walk up the stairs, the mind gauges how far we should move for every step. The mind is always working.

If we walk up the same stairs every day and someone puts an extra inch on one of the steps, we'll definitely trip over it because the mind has remembered where it used to be. Every day, whether we're conscious of it or not, the mind works in this way.

Nāma-rūpa

Yogi: There are the six sense objects: sight, sound, touch, taste, smell and thought or mind objects. Is it possible to know them, to realize that they are rūpa, and to realize that the mind that's observing is mind, nāma? And to realize that rūpa is arising and passing away and that nāma is arising and passing away?

SUT: Understanding that something is rūpa is very different from hearing the theory of it. To realize that this is just rūpa is an insight. First you need to have that insight. Why do we say that sound is rūpa? Why don't we say that sound is mind? We have heard the theory but we don't really know it in our own experience, we don't truly understand.

It's not that I have never thought about this question. Somebody recently asked a similar question and a partial answer occurred to me: simply because I am so conscious of the nature of knowing it was immediately clear that whatever

is being known does not know itself. That is why it is the object. An object cannot know itself, only the knowing can know the object.

All these objects, such as sound and so on, don't have the ability to know themselves. Sound cannot know itself, sound cannot know that it is sound, sound just arises. That's what I realized for myself.

So **nāma-rūpa**, just like the 'I', is a name that we give to certain realities. The Buddha explained these realities and indicated that on the one hand there are phenomena called nāma that share certain characteristics, and on the other hand there are phenomena called rūpa that have other characteristics. It is for us to understand this.

Yogi: So, to begin with, we look at it as sound as sound, not as rūpa?

SUT: Yes, just sound as sound.

Nibbāna

Yogi: Everyone seems to want enlightenment. But I don't even know what it is. What is it?

SUT: It's not just you who doesn't know what enlightenment is, none of us do! So anybody who says they want enlightenment doesn't actually really know what they say they want.

Interpreter: I was telling a yogi today about something Sayadaw said a long time ago: that you, that is to say the delusion of you, think that you want **nibbāna**. But if 'you' saw nibbāna you would run away because 'you' is created by delusion and delusion does not want to be enlightened. Delusion wants to stay deluded, so you would run away, and not even just from nibbāna, but even from a normal vipassanā insight. When people realize anattā and there is no sense of self they often cry because they are so affected by the sense of loss.

SUT: In the Buddha Dhamma it is wisdom that wants nibbāna. But when I speak to the yogis, I realize that yogis who want to be enlightened, all of us, just have greed to be enlightened. We think it will be bring us something better.

Yogi: Does an enlightened person have to maintain that enlightenment? Some teachers say you can lose the enlightenment, you have to keep practicing. Some people say there is enlightening rather than enlightenment because you have to keep constantly...

SUT: In Theravāda, I agree with the 'enlightening' but only as far as vipassanā **ñāṇa**, the insights, are concerned. And it's the same with awareness and samādhi. Because the mind always arises to pass away we cannot hang on to the quality unless we develop it one more time. It leaves the legacy, so it's there, but if you don't practice it one more time it gets less.

So it's always up and down. You have to remain aware all the time so the awareness becomes stronger and stronger. If you stop being aware, the awareness will become weaker and weaker.

If you have an insight into anattā, **dukkha**, anicca, or whatever, you have to continue to be aware to allow that understanding to continue to be fresh in the mind. If you

don't, the understanding will fade as the awareness fades. So that is true. That is the enlightening bit.

But in Theravāda there is the magga ñāṇa and the phala ñāṇa. If you become enlightened to that degree, then that bit is permanent, that bit cannot be taken away from you.

Yogi: You don't forget.

Yogi: What is Sayadaw's description of nibbāna?

SUT: I only know the theory behind it, it says when there is no greed, anger, or delusion, there's nibbāna. I don't know about nibbāna as an object, but the Buddha has described it as the mind without greed, aversion, or delusion.

The way I see it is that I can understand that a mind can be without greed, aversion, or delusion in the moment, so I work towards that and refining that. I don't know whether the object nibbāna exists or not, so I'll forget about it. The mind is a bit closer, more familiar to us.

Yogi: Kusala mind is nibbāna, meaning there's no lobha, dosa, moha?

SUT: I wouldn't say that, nibbāna is the object of a particular mind, the magga ñāṇa and the phala ñāṇa. Ñāṇa is wisdom, so a particular kind of wisdom mind has nibbāna as its object. Not all minds take nibbāna as their object.

Yogi: **Magga-phala citta**.

SUT: Yes, **magga-phala** ñāṇa or **citta**. That's why we mustn't look for the object or chase the object, we have to change the mind. The mind always takes the object that matches its quality. I talked earlier about subtle minds not being able to have gross objects, in the same way once the mind's quality is strong enough and it matches that level of purity... You are not in charge, it's the work of wisdom, and when that wisdom strikes...



Objects

Yogi: In my previous practice I used to choose an object. But Sayadaw is saying not to choose an object. Sometimes I find I need to choose an object to maintain mindfulness and avoid torpor.

SUT: Yes, you can choose an object. It is a question of skilful means: when the mind is not able to choose its own object naturally you have to make the mind choose an object.

Some people do it this way: they use a main object and build up the awareness and clarity, and when they feel very clear and aware then they gently let go of the main object and see what else is there. You still maintain some awareness of the main object but then other things become clear as well.

In the Czech Republic, this yogi was watching an object and then he saw a thought. When he asked if he should look at the thought, I said, “No, don't look at the thought, you already know it.” Because once you do that there's a bit more energy

and the thought will stop. You already know the thought, just maintain it like that. You're in the right balance. When you're in the right balance you might be looking at something but you know other things as well. They impinge on your awareness. The main object keeps the mind energised and that energy allows you then to receive all the other senses as well. That's the right way.

What I am concerned about is people thinking their mind is distracted when they come to the stage where they're aware of the main object and other objects, and then trying harder and harder to focus on the one object in order to block out the others, thinking they shouldn't know the other things. What I am saying is that at that point it's fine. The mind is in a balanced state. It is knowing things. You're not distracted. You just know more things.

It means that the ability to know is strong. The awareness is expanded. We have a strange misconception that we need to keep the mind on one object for the samādhi to be strong. That's not really true.

Even using only one object, if we're doing it right it should get to the point where, when the mindfulness is expanded, we know the main object and other objects. We feel clear, as if we have a bird's eye view.

The problem is that we often take one object and then get sunk into that one object. We never sort of come out of the object and just know.

Yogi: I've got ringing in the ears, so that's like an object as well. This week I used it as an observation.

Interpreter: Do you like the ringing in your ears?

Yogi: It's never really bothered me too much until this week.

Interpreter: Until you took it as an object.

Yogi: I'm kind of semi-struggling, using it as an object, trying to let it go. If there's anything that could be said it would be helpful.

SUT: When you don't like an object, don't make it your meditation object.

[in English] Don't use it as a meditation object. If you have liking or disliking for some object, you should not use it as a meditation object. First take care of your liking or disliking. If you're neutral, then you can use any object. If you're not reacting. Reaction is problem, right?

Interpreter: So when you have a reaction to an object, that object is no longer a **dhamma** object for you because it's an aversion object or an attachment object. It is no longer a neutral object. That's why you shouldn't observe the object directly anymore.

Yogi: And then be aware of that aversion?

SUT: [in English] Yes. And change attitude.

Change the ideas. 'This is natural, it's not a problem.'

Yogi: Is aversion or greed operating no matter what object you are looking at?

SUT: When there is a wrong view, greed and aversion can come.

[in English] Wrong thoughts.

Yogi: If we don't use an object that we like or dislike—but when something emerges like fear or greed or something that's an object of aversion or—

SUT: [in English] Aversion of the aversion.

Yogi: There's something about looking at the greed or looking at the fear... What you're saying is, don't take it as an object?

SUT: There is the defilement that arises in the mind and you can observe it, like anger arising in the mind. Anger is an object, right?

What I ask you to watch out for is the same. Whether the object is anger or ringing in the ears you have to check whether there is aversion to having this object or experience. Do you like the ringing in the ears? Do you like anger? And

that is in the watching mind. That's what I want you to watch out for. Sometimes it can get into a cycle. You don't like having wrong attitude and then you try to watch that with wrong attitude because you want it to go away.

At that point you really have to stop. Don't keep meditating. Don't keep observing anymore. You have to stop and think about what you should do before continuing. Then you have to start with something completely neutral, something that is not going to agitate the mind. At that point it's like quicksand, the more you do, the more you sink. So just don't go there. Stay still.

Yogi: But sometimes you can observe dosa non-aversively?

Interpreter: Yes, correct. You can. That's what he's saying.

Yogi: That's when it really starts to become clear...

SUT: [in English] Right, right.

When we're not looking through coloured glasses then we can do anything. We can watch any object. Yes.

Yogi: Today's experience, like travelling through the dam, I was observing my thinking mind, it's just quite, quite neutral, you can see the beauty, the expanse, but the minute you step down and you're very near to the edge of the dam, a bit of was fear arising. And also when we first went down there was a very loud water sound, it's as if a big waterfall, but when I look

at it, it was not. So I was just observing how I felt, how the sounds can be... my perception deceiving me... but looking down, the fear comes, or no fear, whatever... That's reporting today's activities in that way.

SUT: So it's good to recognize... You need to be interested like this, attention to your mind.

Yogi: Not only the object, but whatever is happening... The feeling becomes the mind state.

SUT: Those are objects too. Objects are not just outside but what's in your mind is also an object.



Yogi: So how can we observe?

SUT: Like this, yes, better. I went to Hong Kong, and there was a retreat centre on a tiny little knoll. I told the yogis that they can sit anywhere they like.

Only five people sat in the meditation hall, a lot of people went down to the water side to sit. So one yogi was talking about how he went to the bottom of the little knoll, and the water's quite far, it's quite rocky, and he was sitting there with his eyes closed, and it's very peaceful because you hear the water and all that, and then as his concentration got better at one point he thought the water was really close, he thought the tide was coming in. He opened his eyes and it was still far away. So you recognize how the mind does that.

But maybe he wouldn't have realized that if he was sitting in the Dhamma Hall!

But that's not always true: there was one yogi sitting in the Dhamma Hall and he got really angry because he thought somebody shouted in his ear so he looked up to glare at the person—nobody was there—there was someone on the far side of the hall!

Because when your awareness and your concentration are more present, then you feel like the objects are very near to you, like everything that is experienced is very close to you.

SUT: Can you feel the touching sensation when you tap your fingers together? Do you feel it on the index finger or the thumb? When it touches, is it one touch or two touches? Very interesting. Which side is more obvious? Does it feel as if it's touching more on the index finger or the thumb? I do it all the time. Try it now. Which side is more obvious?

Most people think it's more on the thumb because there's a larger area on the thumb. But actually it depends on where you put your attention.

Yogi: Before I thought to myself index finger, but when you said thumb and you put your mind on thumb, I thought thumb.

SUT: So put it on both sides and you'll feel two.

Yogi: Because the index finger is the one that moves...

SUT: So that's what I want to say: the object is never the full picture. Where is the mind? How is it working? That makes the difference as to how you experience the object.

Yogi: You create your own experience?

Interpreter: Yes!

Yogi: Can you create nibbāna?

SUT: Yes, you can—a false one. If you're creating it, yes.

Observing the Observing Mind/ The Knower

Yogi: What about observing the observing mind?

SUT: That's it, that's the state where you feel there's a broader view. You can sense that there's something that is aware. That's the watching mind.

Yogi: Sayadaw has made us aware that there is an array of objects and there is the knower. So we can either be aware of the knower or be aware of the objects that it is knowing. I found that there is a battle going on between the two. Which one to know? The knower or the object?

SUT: Take the knower if you can know it. Because the knower comes with the known, with the objects. If you know the

knower you already know the objects. If you choose the object you may not know the knower but if you know the knower then you cannot help but know the object.

Yogi: I find it's very easy to get pulled into trying to work out the defilement by using thought. The question is, can you not make that see-er, that knower, the object? Continually try to be instead of falling into what you're hearing, et cetera?

Interpreter: Yes, you can see the knower and make that the object. That's what he calls—

SUT: Watching mind.

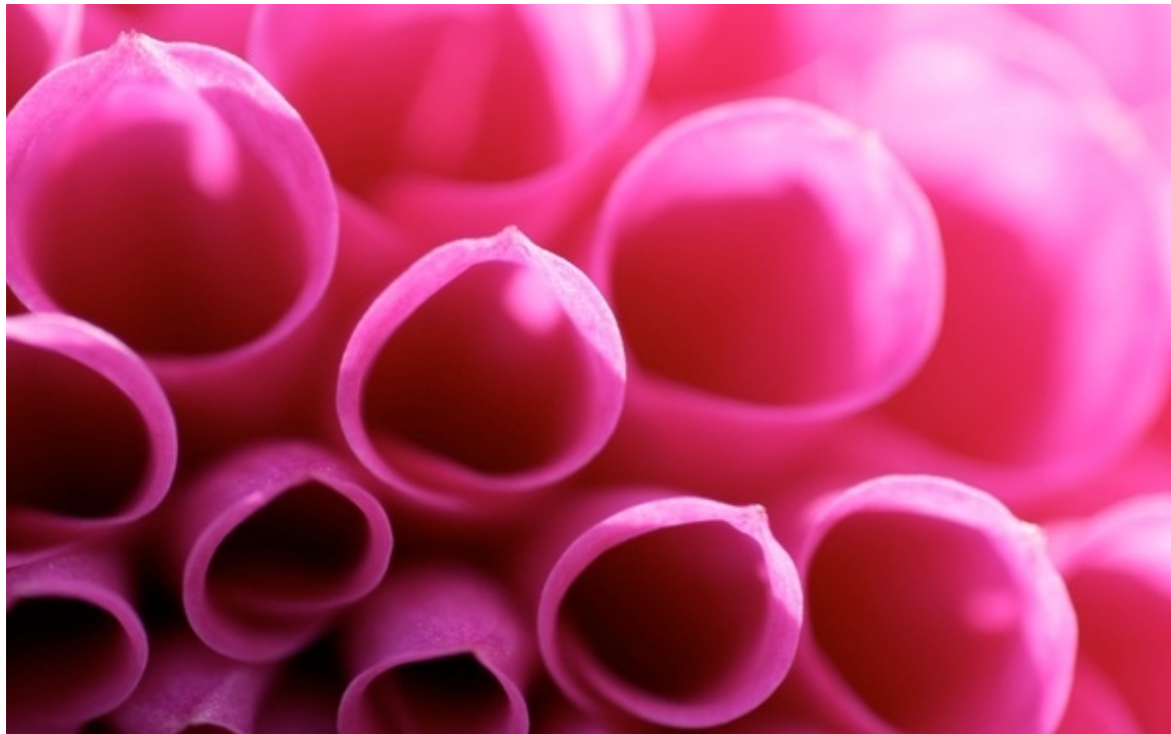
Interpreter: He uses different words sometimes but basically that, observing the awareness, or knowing the awareness, or knowing the watching mind.

Yogi: So basically the whole thing is to pull back into that continually?

SUT: So long as you are conscious of the knower, the knower continues to know, and it feeds itself knowing, knowing, knowing.

When we're not conscious or acknowledging or recognizing the knower, then we are not sure if the knower is at work or not, whether we have got sucked into the object or we're knowing the object.

Whatever we see, whatever we are aware of, if we are aware of three things, you know there is a fourth thing because that's what's seeing the three. If you know two things, there are actually three things, because the third thing is the seeing. If you know four things there is a fifth that is seeing the four. So you must remember this.



Yogi: At a subtle level, while I am meditating, I'm watching the mind attach to objects. And I can't help but think, 'Oh yes, it's attaching to this object, I'm watching it attach to this object.' But then there's always the I that is watching the back of the mind working. So how...

SUT: Just leave it like that. Just recognize there's a sense of I there. Now the mind believes that the watcher is 'me' because now the watcher is more constant. Yes?

Yogi: It's almost like the watcher feels the mind is working for him—, or working against him—, or working in parallel with him.

SUT: So you see how subtly the mind works. Everything else can be an object but the mind says, 'This is mine.' This 'this' is not changing, it seems to be a constant, so the mind attaches the 'I' to it. That's why you must recognize the knowing as well, recognize the watcher. Then when you recognize the watcher and all that's happening is a stream of watchers knowing watchers knowing watchers... That's when, again, it becomes an object, so slightly less attachment to the 'I'.

There was a Japanese yogi. He said, "Honestly, I just can't wrap my head around it. There is a me, this is me, I can't believe there is no me."

So I said, "Okay, let's start at the physical, just remove your hair, your eyes, your ears, your skin, your bones, remove all of that and what's left? Which part is you?"

"OK, maybe not the physical, but I am paying attention, that's definitely me. I am the one who is doing this work."

I say, "Okay. And are you aware all the time? Are you paying attention all the time? Are you always there then? What about

when you are asleep? You can't pay attention then, where are you?"

Yogi: Sometimes I know if the watcher has been present for a while, and I intimately say, "Thank you watcher." It seems like I'm distancing myself from the watcher.

SUT: Yes, in thanking the watcher you acknowledge that it's something separate again. That gives the backing-up and recognizing it.

Yogi: I've been watching the knower a lot for six or seven years, I don't notice any difference. It seems always the same really. I was doing the dishes a couple of days ago and all of a sudden I just felt the dishes, and it was like—I can't exactly say this—but it was like for a moment no one was there. I mean fear came in actually.

SUT: This is normal. That's a flash of wisdom into reality and then fear.

Yogi: I thought that there were just circumstances that produced that, I could tell that. And then the knower stood out much more clearly for a while.

SUT: The object and the knowing of it are like a coin, so you know the watcher, the knower. The watcher knows the object because of the sense of knowing of the object, both of which

arise together. Know all that. Also, perhaps the reason that you don't see that the watcher is changing is because maybe you don't have a grasp of reality yet.

And then when you have two or three different objects, think about it. When there are two or three different objects, is it the same mind knowing each object? Or does each object have something knowing it?

Just keep going steadily. The knower is closest to us, to the 'me'. Until you take another step, until the mind steps back another bit and sees the watcher itself, before that happens it feels like the watcher is 'me'. The mind is very fast and very subtle. At a subtle level, many functions of mind are operating at the same time. When we get a glimpse into that, when we get an insight into that, we understand the mind is constantly in flux. That's when by reference there can be an understanding also that the watcher is not fixed.

For example take intention, intention to do something. The intention to do something follows the action throughout so that the moment the intentions stop, the movements stop. And then the intention to remain still begins and stays until another intention arises. If you can see these intentions you will realize that there are new ones all the time.

Yogi: Is the knower the knowing?

SUT: We use different words, the knower, the see-er, the watching mind, and all that. We use so many different words to try to get everybody to understand the same thing, but it's definitely not a person.

Yogi: So the moment that we become aware, or the moment we know that we are aware, there is a moment of recognition there, and is that like a thought? We can't know we're aware without a thought being there.

SUT: Yes that is a thought. Whenever there's recognition there has always already been a thought. Our mind's natural habit is always to identify things with words. That's how we know things or concepts. So when the thought is about what we are experiencing, that's when we are very sure 'I have experienced this'. And that's when the memory of it is also much stronger, once we can describe it to ourselves.

Sometimes we experience things but we don't put any words to it. We know we have experienced it but it's easy to let those experiences go by and not really retain them.

Yogi: So in the moment before that naming is applied, there is like a **vedanā**, a recognition in an amorphous sense?

SUT: Yes, it is upon what we already know that we then give meaning, define and describe.

This teacher from America describes it quite well, she says when she watches thought—she says thoughts come in words through the mind—when she looked at the beginning of the thought it stopped, but she already knew the thought so her mind didn't have to spell it out completely. That's how subtly the mind has already done the thinking. By the time the sentence has come out in our heads it's a very gross level



thought, but at a very subtle level we've already done the thinking, the giving meaning.

Sometimes a whole story can be over in a split second in our minds. Our minds then express it in words or images, but the beginning of the process was much earlier, at a very subtle level.

And sometimes we may recognize that there is a thought but it doesn't come up to the gross level. We know there was a thought but we don't know what we were thinking. We just know that the mind seems to have done something. Sometimes the mind is singing. [Laughter]

Yogi: When you meditate you are supposed to observe all the changing phenomena, in-breath, out-breath and so on. But the observer, the knower, doesn't seem to change, it seems to remain neutral. And that's quite different from what the Buddha taught, that everything is impermanent. Can Sayadaw elaborate on this please?

SUT: That's why you must also know the mind. When you know the knower more deeply you will begin to see that the knower is also changing.

There was this monk, he was practicing the techniques to intellectually apply the concept of impermanence on to everything he observe. So whatever happens, 'Oh, this is impermanent, this is impermanent, this is impermanent.' Whether you understand it or not, you remind yourself 'this is impermanent'. Arising and passing, that it must always be like that.

And he worked very hard, he was very mindful all the time, and he applied this concept all the time. Then he began to notice that the knower didn't change. In his experience everything else was changing but the knower did not change. Because the momentum was there the experience of the knower had become more and more constant, and he said to me, "Should I watch the knower too, and make it impermanent in a sense?" I said, "Oh, please don't do that!"

There must be real understanding. You don't artificially apply this concept, you might block the real understanding by artificially applying it. Because he was working very hard I was quite confident that if he just kept knowing the knower, eventually, certainly, he was going to discover that the knower was impermanent somehow.

The yogi had already worked hard to get to the point that the knower was constantly there, I just wanted him to stay knowing, not forgetting.

In some Dhamma circles there is the idea that we have to try to see, to understand what we are taught theoretically. Like impermanence, dukkha, and anatta. And they try to purposely intellectually understand that.

My teacher used to say to me, don't assume that what you have experienced is impermanence, anatta or dukkha. Let the understanding arise naturally. Let the understanding come to you.

[in English] Appear in the mind naturally, this is more real.

That's the bhāvanā-mayapaññā, developed wisdom. When we apply it intellectually, 'I think this is impermanence, I think this is such-and-such...' then because we are busy applying our own normal reasoning, that natural wisdom is not allowed to arise.

Some people observe things and think, 'This has arisen and passed away, this is arising and passing away,' and they believe that seeing that experience is the understanding of impermanence. But the understanding of impermanence is very different from experiencing something arising and passing away.

[in English] Now you hear? [claps] Do you understand impermanence?

Interpreter: No, we just hear the sound.

SUT [in English] Experience is here but no understanding.

So there is experience but no understanding. So it's not right to artificially decide, "Oh, this must mean impermanence," or something like that.

Yogi: Sometimes it feels clear that the watcher is watching me watch, and sometimes it's not so clear and I feel a tension in the back of my head. I'm not sure if it's just tension or the knower having... maybe I'm trying too hard. So perhaps a comment around how one knows where the knower is. And

the other thing is, who is watching the knower? [Laughter] The ego or...?

SUT: The watching mind watching you watch the objects is actually the watching mind seeing the knowing mind or the objects. But, because the mind always needs to reference 'me', in this case your mind has made the knowing mind 'me'. So the watcher is watching the knowing mind that knows the objects, but you've made the knowing mind 'me'.

As far as the tension in the head goes, the fact that sometimes it's clear and sometimes it's not just depends on the momentum of the awareness and the natural building of the wisdom that understands that there are different natures at work, the objects and the knowing or the watching.

If you see the watching mind, fair enough, let it be. If you don't see the watching mind it doesn't matter. That's when the mind is at a stage where it needs to be building the momentum again.

Once the conditions are right, the watching mind will appear naturally again. It's always there, it's just whether we are able to realize it's there or not, and that happens when there's enough awareness. Particularly when you have this 'three-stage watching', where there's a watching of the knowing, knowing the objects. That has a lot to do with understanding. And that happens naturally, we can't think about it and try to separate them. When it sees enough it will understand that there are these three natures. Then you will see the three at work.

As far as who is watching or knowing the watcher, once you understand the nature of how the knowing and the watching are happening, once you understand that in fact it's just a knowing of the previous knowing and then the next knowing knows that, and then the next knowing knows that... Then you will understand that although it feels like there is one thing hovering there it is a stream, but it is also renewing itself and knowing itself.

Yogi: When you think about it, sometimes it seems like it's merged with the 'me', even though it feels separate.

SUT: Yes, that's right. It's just different levels of understanding due to how much awareness-wisdom there is at that moment.

What you want to do is simply recognize that in this moment there is this much understanding, the mind thinks the watcher is me. And then at other times the mind sees the watcher as not me. Just recognizing when it's like this and when it's like that.



Pain, Anxiety & Fear

Yogi: How do you handle bodily pain from sitting? I'm feeling anxious sometimes and fearful of it.

SUT: The first thing your mind must know is that if you really can't take it you can change your posture, then the mind will not be so fearful. You must remind yourself that the pain is not yours. You are not in pain, pain is a phenomenon, it's a natural phenomenon, and it's arising. That's how you need to approach it.

When the pain arises, right from the beginning, watch how your mind is feeling towards it. Is it anxious? Is it already worried about the pain? And always remember to relax, relax and then look at the feeling. Don't look at the pain directly, always look at how the mind is reacting towards the pain, whether the mind is reacting, how it's thinking of the pain. If you look at the pain directly and you don't look at the mind,

the tension immediately starts to grow in the mind. So you want to look at the mind to keep the tension down.

You will notice that so long as you can keep the mind relaxed the pain will be bearable. When the tension starts to grow in the mind and the tension in the mind becomes unbearable, that is when you have to make yourself comfortable.

The reason I tell you to practice this way, to avoid the pain when it is unbearable, is because you want to cultivate wholesome states of mind, you don't want to cultivate akusala minds. If you sit and clench your teeth and bear unbearable pain, then what the mind is doing is reacting, there is a lot of aversion and you're just cultivating a lot of akusala minds. I don't want you to do that.

Instead, watch the reaction for as long as you are able, so there is still awareness and kusala; when you are not able, change your posture and start again from where you are able, so the awareness is continuous and you're not fighting.

There is no need to look at the pain directly. As you watch the state of mind, you will notice how the pain feels when the mind is calm. You will notice how much more painful it feels when the mind is more tense. And you will understand the relationship between mind reaction and experience. Always only watch for as long as you are able. It's a learning process so you try your best, but once there is too much tension in the mind allow yourself to become comfortable.

And as you watch this, you become more and more able to relax the mind. You might find it interesting to watch the relationship between the tension in the mind and the pain. And then you will find that you are slowly able to sit with it longer in order to understand it better. Each time you understand a little more which allows you to do this. Don't be afraid, you can change your position anytime.

Yogi: Sometimes it's so painful that even if you change posture it's still painful! [Laughter]

SUT: Because the mind has been reacting very strongly, you have been forcing yourself to sit.

Yogi: Yes, I feel tense.

SUT: There was a yogi who was sitting with a lot of pain. It was so painful—he could stand it but he was just forcing himself to sit—and then clock struck. When the clock struck the hour, even though he hadn't yet moved, there was no more pain! He was so relieved. Once the mind is relieved it doesn't feel painful anymore.

'Painful' is the name that aversion, dosa, gives to a sensation. If you can really get to the point where you can relax the mind until there is no dosa, until the mind is actually feeling quite neutral, you can look at that same sensation and you'll find, once the mind is able to relax that much, it's just an interesting sensation to observe. Instead of a solid kind of hard sensation you will find that it becomes much softer, that there's more movement.



Yogi: The other day I was talking about aches and pains and how I was having anxiety and fear. After Sayadaw gave some instruction I separated the body from the mind and I felt better. More relaxed. I mean I was having bodily aches so I separated that from being anxious and thinking about it.

Interpreter: 'Separate' meaning you were watching it separately? As an object? You know the mind is different from the body.

Yogi: Previously when aches and pains arose I ignored them and just kept on sitting until it was quite painful and then I would change my posture. But now I can feel one spot is like a

current and then it went off. And then another spot came up again, and then another spot, it's all different spots.

SUT: That's good. In reality pain is not solid, pain is many different sensations together.

When you say, 'separating the mind and the body', in fact the mind is just recognizing that they are different natures. There are two different objects: there's sensation in the body which is interpreted as pain, and there is mind, and the mind has reaction towards the pain, such as anxiety, fear, or knowing. So you see that they are two different natures: this is the mind bit and this is the body bit, right? That is the separation, understanding that there is a difference in the nature of mind and body.

This is what you are calling 'a separation,' because you're seeing its different nature. But if the mind accidentally interprets this as separating it from me—there's no me in fact—then that might bring the sense of fear you mentioned.

Yogi: I've been having problems with pain, I'll sit and then after thirty-five minutes the pain will come. It's habitual—I know. So after Sayadaw spoke about opening the eyes, what I tried today was during a few sits I opened my eyes, and just seeing, seeing. I was very careful that it was the mind state I was looking at. And it worked, no pain. And I closed my eyes

again. It worked. And when it started again, I just open my eyes a bit, looking down, and again it helped.

SUT: Yes, that's enough.

Actually it's because you are watching the state of the mind so carefully, so awareness is good, the mind is stable. Because you are aware of the state of mind you maintained stability of mind. When the mind is stable it's neutral. When the mind is neutral a gross object cannot manifest so there can be no painful experience. When the mind becomes gross, agitated, then it can take in a gross object, that's when things can feel painful. So you must always watch the state of your mind.

Patience/ Persistence

Yogi: What about growing true patience, **khanti**?

SUT: True patience, true khanti comes when there is wisdom, otherwise it's tolerating, there is some impatience, enduring but not real... If you are trying to be patient we are already impatient. When there is true wisdom you don't even have to try, you feel patient, you feel accepting.

When there is wisdom and the wholesome states arise, then depending on the object, that's what you call the mind. If it's an equal object you feel mettā, if it's somebody who is suffering more than you, then it's **karuṇā**, if it's somebody who is doing better than you, it's muditā, and if it's something you can't help, it's uppekkhā. It comes naturally because of wisdom.

[in English] Depend on the object, the mind naturally comes. This is real, not try, at that time no need to try.

Yogi: I find what Sayadaw is saying about persistence very helpful. There was a time when I would listen to a lot of different talks. You just pick some things out and then you listen to another teacher and then it starts to get confusing.

I've also tried it the other way round. I would just keep listening to the same talk again and again and again. And I would hear new things and it would get deeper and deeper.

SUT: Yes, familiarity. I don't know if you have a better word for it. It's not just familiarity, maybe intimacy. You know, you get so close to the subject because you study it over and over and over again, whether it's awareness or listening to a Dhamma talk and taking more and more information from it to apply to your practice. When you get so close to it, that's when you know everything possible about it and you become skilful.

Is there anybody here who plays computer games? Then you really know. Because when you play a game, you go through Level 1 again and again and again until you're skilful enough to get to Level 2! By that time you know what's coming. Because you play over and over again, you become more skilful. You cultivate the same thing again and again, numerous times, abundantly.

The Buddha would expound some verse or another, and then if somebody had understood, he would say, “Please cultivate this understanding. You’ve understood, cultivate this understanding over and over again.”



Personal Effort/ Right Effort/ Effortless

Yogi: I remember I read in one of Sayadaw's books not to look at the object, just look from the corner of your eye, look at the mind, look at how the mind reacts to the object.

SUT: Yes. This looking out of the corner of the eye, it denotes how in fact we've already seen the object. It's already seen. Because the tendency of the yogi is, when something is already seen, to want to turn and look at it. We want to focus on it, but it has already been seen.

When you're looking at the workings of the mind and the mind is just in this receiving state, then all the objects that are matched with this mind are known, yes? Just like that, like from the corner of the eye and so on.

At that time when the yogi turns and pays attention to the objects, sometimes it's like too much effort to see, and then sometimes it feels like the object disappears because the

frequency is not matched anymore, then it doesn't see the object.

It's like tuning your spectacles, you know, when you go to the spectacle shop and they put in the different degrees. And if they put in too much it becomes blurred, when it's not enough it's also blurred. But when it's the right degree, the right frequency, you see clearly.

When the mind is working naturally then usually the right frequency is there. And then sometimes we put in our personal effort, we want to see it more, perhaps a little bit of greed thinking we can see it more clearly, then the balance can sometimes go out.

Yogi: A question about flies. [Laughter] I tried to go for walk without a fly net, I tried to be patient with them—

SUT: Recognize. 'Trying to be' is hard. 'Recognize what is' is easier. It takes less effort. It is more natural. You don't have to do anything, you just have to know. The mind is impatient, it doesn't like this, it wants to push it away.

Yogi: I was sort of labeling because there's so much coming in: seeing, hearing, seeing, touching. Recognizing all this was too tiring. So then I just stopped and noticed something a bit like

a wide experience. Nothing is focused on but everything is known, and I feel like I'm just resting, I'm not doing anything... [Laughter]

SUT: Just stay like that for a while, it will change. So allow yourself to investigate that state, investigate what it brings, it will not last forever. In the initial stages we all tend to do that because we don't understand that it could be less tiring. So now the mind has understood that that it's tiring and it has stopped. It's just new, but it will change.

It's all part of the process of learning to meditate. There will be some states where we will find we need to be labeling to bring our attention. After a while the mind knows how to do it, and labeling is extra, it's just too much work, and it's not necessary so then we drop it. We're left with one thing and then other things happen.

It's just like any field of study, when we study we have to put in effort. We spend our time learning mathematics, how to do this and that, algebra, physics, trigonometry. We try to memorize, we try to remember, we try to relate this to that, and then when we know it all we don't need any books anymore.

Initially you have to put in the effort; but once you are experienced then you just look at a situation and you know why it happened. That's your understanding. Whatever you have been expertly researching or studying, that's what you

will understand, and that's what will come to you in a flash when you see it.

For example, eye surgeons study for years but when they are skilful they do the operations very quickly. They already know what is significant and what is not, what to pay attention to.

Always remember that meditation is not a static activity where one state is right, 'this is the right state of awareness, I've got to keep this'. No! Once your own wisdom is stronger, then your practice changes. In the beginning we need to do this because that's how we're taught. That's our beginning exercise, the effort-making that we need to do to get to the point where we understand the practice and we can just practice.

Initially our practice is always *sati* first, then *vīrya* and *samādhi*, and wisdom is trailing quite far behind. We have some borrowed wisdom to apply the *sati* and the *vīrya* so we can get *samādhi*, and that's how we are working.

As we keep plodding along, little spots of wisdom come to us and they then become part of our arsenal, and, hopefully, the wisdom slowly catches up. And then it's working together with awareness, *vīrya*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, *saddhā*, all working together, and hopefully one day the wisdom gets so strong that it gets ahead. And then it's not the awareness at work anymore, it's the wisdom. So you're aware but wisdom is the one that watches, together with the awareness. Then wisdom is the leader and awareness just does its work, it becomes the worker.

Now if I want to go into retreat like all of you and start following a schedule, it's tedious. I can't do that anymore; it's too stilted, it's artificial. Like I have to put in things that I don't need to put in. If I don't try to practice, it's there naturally, I'm aware. And it's always there.

I have noticed that when the practice is strong, when the awareness is strong and everything is working together very strongly, the feeling that I am meditating is absolutely not there at that time.



Yogi: In my sitting meditation, my mind inclines to adopt either or both methods. The first is that I invoke the instructions on ānāpānasati with the intention of developing sati and samādhi and I go into the details of the instructions on ānāpānasati, in, out, short, long, all that.

And I feel that there is a great deal of necessity for personal effort to be put into focusing the attention on these various aspects of the breath and I also think that it is relevant on this approach to recall the injunctions on the attainment of jhāna.

At the end of each jhāna instructions there is the Pāli words which the translation I have of it is stirring up energy, exerting the mind. So here in my first approach is an actual positive, conscious effort to be made in developing sati and samādhi.

The second approach is this. I start off with a little bit of ānāpānasati and when I feel, after a short time, that it is established, I make that as an anchor and I stick to that anchor and I start surveying everything else that comes into consciousness, which is sound of silence, the belly, the rising and falling.

So both of these approaches, scenarios, involve effort. And yet to be here from time to time, the real thing is effortless. And I would like Sayadaw to make some observation on these two aspects, on their continuance or their discontinuation or any modifications that would enhance.

SUT: In the beginning it's fine to do the practices as you are doing. Personal effort is always necessary in the beginning. Because when we don't have a practice that has momentum and has its own steam then we have to put in personal effort to get the engine going. When you put in effort it's not only in the sitting, it's very important to carry your awareness into every moment so that awareness is continuous.

When your awareness is continuous over and over, day after day, it gains momentum. When it gains momentum it can't stop and that's when it feels effortless, that's when your personal effort doesn't have to be so much inside, but it's not that the faculty of viriya in the mind stops. Viriya continues but you don't have to exert it so much because you have already exerted it enough for there to be momentum, for it to keep carrying on by itself. That is what is meant by effortless. It's not that right effort stops. Right effort gains momentum and therefore it continues to run on its own momentum. But nothing can happen without right effort.

It is one of the five faculties, the indriya(s). It must be there. Once the five faculties gain momentum, they all work together and they continue to work together. They are always present. If you ever go on a retreat where you try to be continuously mindful for one, two weeks, you'll notice after one, two weeks that it's not so much effort to try to maintain your mindfulness it seems to come more and more naturally and that's the feeling of effortlessness.

Yogi: In sitting, because there's momentum of mindfulness, there seems to be a lot happening, it's almost as if one can see lots of mind movies in a second. It seems very clear to me that it's **anicca lakkhaṇa**. As I try to investigate the mind after some time that fades, and then I have to start noticing simple things again.

I'm wondering if Sayadaw can talk around this increasing and decreasing of mindfulness.

SUT: When it goes against momentum and then it drops off, why does it drop off?

Yogi: The energy seems to fade off.

SUT: Because there's doubt. You don't know what to do at that point in time. Actually at that point when you feel like you're not sure what you're beginning to understand, it seems that some understanding is coming but you're not sure, don't try to do anything, just continue like that. That's what brought you here.

The wisdom is beginning to gather. It hasn't gathered enough to pop out, but when you wonder how to make it pop out, that's it.

Yogi: So notice the wondering.

SUT: [in English] That's right!

Everything you've been doing is right, even your starting over again simply. So you know how to do it, you just keep have to keep doing that.

It's as if you're lying down and a family of chickens is coming towards you—that's the wisdom. And if you just lie there and continue doing what you've already been doing the chickens feel comfortable that you are not a threat and they'll probably walk over you. [Laughter]

But if you hear the chickens coming and think, 'Oh! I wonder if they're going to come?' They'll all run away. [More laughter]

In the beginning it's like that. We're not skilful, we don't really understand the nature of the mind.

There's continuity, there's momentum, there's the gathering of enough information, data, and wisdom, and it should just go on like that. But we don't realize and then, instead of letting it continue naturally, we consciously start thinking about it, and then the natural wisdom weakens.

This is an example of papañca actually, it's unnecessary. At that point we start to think, 'What shall I do?' It comes in like doubt, but we don't really need to think that.

Anicca lakkhaṇa is an understanding of that nature. It doesn't have to be that we see something arising and passing away and that experience that makes us realize anicca lakkhaṇa.



There is no fixed experience. You might see something changing or flowing, you might see it coming and going understanding that it's different all the time, there are all these different ways. It is not the experience that determines whether you get the insight. There's no particular way of seeing an object that will help an insight to arise. The insight can arise regardless of the object.

Positive Thinking

Yogi: Is it like positive thinking? No matter how negative the pain is you think it's okay, do it like that?

SUT: I am not advocating positive thinking because positive thinking is not real. You might be feeling pain and yet saying to yourself, "It's okay, it's okay," but it's not okay. You are trying to change the state of your mind intentionally and that's not really seeing things as they are.

What I'm saying is, if it is painful know that it is painful. Know how the mind is. When the mind is feeling tense, see if you can relax it. If you can't relax it, you have to try and make yourself comfortable. But if you can relax it you can see how it might make the pain feel better.

If you're able to maintain a state of mind where the mind is not attached and not averse, where the state of mind is stable and neutral, then the mind cannot think something is 'nice' or 'not nice', it cannot think something is pleasant or painful. Do

you understand? Pleasant or painful is the interpretation of a mind that has attachment or aversion. When the mind is neutral then the experience is just the experience.

With positive thinking, sometimes if the negativity in the mind is not very deeply-rooted you can think of something positively and it will wash over the negativity and you sort of feel better. But some negativities are very deeply-rooted, you can tell yourself it's okay or that it will be okay, but the inner mind will never accept it, the subconscious mind doesn't accept it. Then it doesn't matter how positive you try to be, it won't really feel positive, and then the mind starts to have inner conflict.

The important thing is right view, to see it as it is happening. When it is like this how the mind is, when it is like that how the mind is. To see it as it really is all the time, then you see what is coloured and what is not.

I used to tell people first to accept what was happening. And that does sort of make the mind feel a bit better. But sometimes deep inside the mind doesn't really accept it so at a very subtle level it still feels tension towards whatever it's experiencing. If you are able to see what the mind is feeling, then you become able to see the actual resistance in the mind, the fact that the mind is not accepting. When you're able to see that, you're not supposed to try to accept, because that's artificial; what you're supposed to do is to recognize the mind is not accepting this.

For initial instructions, some yogis are not able to see what they are feeling, or not able to catch the subtle resistances in the mind and all that, then I tell them just to try to accept whatever is going on. Initially that helps, because it helps them to watch it for a little longer and hopefully that helps them to see the reaction in the mind. That's the purpose of it. But if you can see what is happening in the mind, then don't try to accept anything anymore. If you see that the mind is not accepting it—.

[in English] This is real

That's what's real, pay attention to that, be aware of that.



Preconceived Ideas

SUT: There was a yogi on this particular retreat and she told me that after about four or five days of being mindful in a retreat she can't sleep anymore, and it happens to her every retreat. She can't sleep but the thing is that if she can't sleep for four or five days her anxiety levels really build, so she has to take a pill. If she doesn't she is starting to go berserk so she has to calm herself. It really bothers her.

So I asked her, when did this begin. And it started on her very first retreat. And it had followed her since then. What happened on her very first retreat was that she was practising with an achievement attitude which is usual for yogis, so after a few days trying to get where you think you should be getting, one gets frustrated, she was trying too hard.

Once you are trying too hard, the mind is agitated, there's more tension, and you're putting in more adrenaline so she can't sleep anymore. She couldn't sleep the rest of the retreat.

But what stayed with her were two concepts. The concept of a retreat: every time she went to a retreat she came with the anxiety that she might not be able to sleep. And she would try to sleep, because she thinks sleep is necessary. So that's the second concept, sleep is necessary.

So I said, well, forget it. Tell yourself you're not on retreat, you're on holiday. And if you can't sleep at night, sleep in the daytime. I don't care when you sleep, so long as when you're awake you're aware, I don't care, you sleep when you need to—don't be a yogi! They've been practicing for years, they're not people you have to tell to try to be aware, they're trying to use it in life anyway, but retreats are the problem. So she slept that night. I have seen many people with Dhamma Hall trauma!

It's serious—they can't go to the Dhamma Hall. Approaching it or even just walking past it creates tension. Imagine how much suffering they've been going through in the Dhamma Hall. How much they have been forcing themselves in the Dhamma Hall. Because they're forcing themselves, they're already suffering, they're doing something wrong, they have some wrong concept but they don't know it, but the place for this to take place is in the Dhamma Hall!

And sometimes I feel sad for yogis—they do months on retreat like that! After a long time some of them walk around with a band of tension in their heads, or tension in the top of their head or something... And it's like a hallucination: because of the anxiety they always take there, it's not really there, it's just the anxiety that brings it up.

There are some people who after several months of practicing “intensively”, come with some kind of headache in their head, which manifests suddenly when they sit in meditation. So then I explain and it takes one and a half months of relaxing and all that.

For them in fact you can't even use the word 'meditate' because it's associated with all of this. I have to tell them, 'You're not meditating, you're just knowing yourself, being aware,' something not meditating.

You have to change the way you think about it, you have to wait for them to relax, feel more comfortable, feel nothing threatening in this environment. Nobody's going to scold him for not practicing in the Dhamma Hall, or things like that.

There's a brilliant yogi, for years he's had this, and I have been trying to work with it for years with him. So every time he comes on retreat, the moment he takes a sitting position, and he sits very well, like this, very straight—the moment he takes the position, closes his eyes, he gets a headache and cannot meditate, and everything becomes so gross it's too subtle, or something, and nothing is observable. But he tries very hard. And I told him not to try.

I watched him and realized that the moment he sat he was already tense. Because he has the thought that the moment he sits he can't move. The thought of "Don't move! Meditation is “don't move”!"

So this time I told him to sit like he's selling something in the market. And because it's only about being aware, I told him not to sit in that position and sit like you're selling something in the market, and then after a few minutes, maybe ten minutes, change the position, like stretch out your feet, et cetera. Because he is aware. It's just that he's got this horrible association with this blocked head every time he sits in that proper position.

It's like a psychological lock that he gets into. So I tried to get him to try and change the idea of meditation. Even his object—he was told even not to take those objects he tries to take. And even to change his posture. Because the pattern in his mind is so strong, the moment he does something associated with the posture, everything comes in. He practiced very, very hard in the past so the habit is also very, very strong.



Yogi: Well I just wanted to say a big thank you, because it's helped me enormously focusing on awareness rather than thinking 'meditation.'

SUT: Right, right. Yes the word 'meditation' can give a lot of trouble. It's when we've had the word 'meditation' associated with some wrong way that we took it to be.

There was a lay person, one of my friends, a Muslim, and if you said to him "Come meditate," he was like, "No, no!" So I said to him, "Can you feel the touching sensation when tap your fingers together?" And he got really interested, and I would ask him, "Do you feel it on the index finger or the thumb?" And he got really interested and watched it for hours because we were sitting in the shop together, selling our own wares. He didn't call it meditation, but there he was paying attention.

Yogi: I make my living as a psychotherapist, and one of the things that strikes me most is how human minds naturally generate opinions about others. It seems almost biological.

SUT: It's delusion: we don't know anything about a person and we already have an opinion! Whether it's good or bad, it's delusion because we don't know anything. We just make an assumption or form an opinion. That's why every time we see something, we need to ask what the mind is thinking. Every

time we experience something, we need to ask what the mind is thinking. A lot of it is delusion at work.

Quiet and Peaceful

Yogi: We talked yesterday about what the right questions are to ask. For me quite often, when I sit, it becomes stable and quiet and I feel that the body relaxes. And then sometimes I feel something that I would describe as a pressure kind of in front of the body. And quite often it's very strong so the mindfulness goes naturally to that. And sometimes there's a bit of fear, what is this? Or excitement that there's something happening. What would be the right questions to ask?

SUT: So you can ask, how is the mind responding to this experience? What is the mind feeling about this experience? Whatever you're experiencing, it's fine, it's just an experience. I like this question, 'So what?'

Then the mind feels more settled because there's nothing special about it. It's just another experience. And what you can then recognize is that there is awareness. And just keep recognizing that awareness is still present.

Yogi: When the mind quietens down Sayadaw said to ask questions. Can you say something about this?

SUT: What do you want to know? If there's nothing we want to know, no questions will come to mind.

Yogi: Questions like, 'what is the mind doing now?'

SUT: And did you see what the mind was doing?

Yogi: A bit.

SUT: Whenever we ask a question we will discover a little bit more.

Yogi: But that's it. I run out of questions, that's why I want to know the skilful questions to ask.

SUT: They must come from inside. Nothing difficult. Just whatever you are experiencing or seeing. See what you feel curious about. What are you seeing? How are you observing?

Yogi: When I am sitting I am aware of many things and feelings. After that I watch the mind and the mind is very quiet and peaceful, there is a tendency to go to the breath. What do I do then?



SUT: Let the attention go to the breath and then investigate object and knowing mind. Investigate what else can you know, what can you understand about the mind from this?

Yogi: What do you mean ‘investigate’?

SUT: What is object? What is mind? What is the object? What is the knowing? Can you see it? Can you tell the difference

between the knowing and the object when you are doing ānāpāna? What else do you know? Is it only the ānāpāna that is known? What else is being known? Of what else is the mind aware? Does the air go through one nostril or both nostrils? This is just to bring interest to the moment.

There are different things that you can investigate. For example, your breathing: why are you breathing? Why do you have to breathe? If you know other objects, for example, touching or sounds, how many touch points are there? Do you know hearing and ānāpāna and the touching points all at once? Or do you know them one by one? You can investigate in so many ways. If it’s peaceful, why is it peaceful?

Reading

Yogi: I've been trying to maintain mindfulness more while reading. So far that generally takes the form that when I turn the page or if there's a break in the text or if something distracts me, I check the mind. I'm basically looking for checkpoints during reading, because while reading the mindfulness is not so great.

SUT: In the beginning that's what you do, give yourself checkpoints and so on just to bring the mindfulness in. Then slowly that mindfulness will come into recognizing the mind when it's reading and how it feels when it's reading. The mind does lots of things while it's reading, such as looking at the words, making sense of the meaning. It's not just reading the words, the mind is also interpreting.



Reflection/ Track Back

Yogi: Can Sayadaw talk about how he connects the idea of meditation, and what we do in meditation, with reflection?

Interpreter: When you talked about reflection you said you reflect away from this?

Yogi: I reflect on practice but I also reflect in practice, so I do both. While you're in the moment you reflect, and also away from it. That's generally considered what happens. I think that some of what Sayadaw talks about is, for me, reflection in action.

SUT: The Buddha taught his son and said, "Before you speak, reflect. When you're speaking, reflect. After you've spoken, reflect."

Today I asked everyone, what are we sitting and doing?

We get into this 'doing, doing, doing' and not reflecting on what we're doing and how we're doing it. I want you to think and meditate, not just to blindly meditate. Aware, aware, not blindly aware! Use awareness intelligently. Be aware intelligently. It's not just following the instructions. Expand on them, innovate.

The only thing to watch out for is when reflection becomes what is called discursive thinking.

Yogi : Do we need to recall objects, things, experiences or do we let go of them and just be aware of the present moment? If the mind wants to recall and learn from good experiences, what can we do?

SUT: It's just enough to know the objects. The mind will recognize and also remember. If the mind is awake, alert, then the mind will recognize what's happening. We don't have to purposely try to recall things. And as your awareness becomes more continuous, the awareness becomes stronger, the memory function of the mind also becomes stronger anyway.

Yogi: If the mind wants to recall and learn from good experiences, what can we do?

SUT: From bad experiences you can also learn.

Right Information

Yogi: For me, the greatest freedom came from knowing that bhāvanā meant cultivating the mind, and not bhāvanā equals samādhi.

SUT: That's why it's very important to define things right from the beginning. What are we doing? We need to know that. No matter what we do, if we are clear ahead of time what the work is about and how we're going to do it, then that work is much more powerful. That's why I give these reminders during the sit, to keep reminding us because we forget. 'This is what we're doing, we're not trying to do that.' We're just being aware not trying to stop the thoughts.

But the defilements will keep doing their work, they'll make us forget, not remember, try to achieve, et cetera. So when we meditate, it's a good thing to always check, because when we check we have to use wisdom, we have to check against our knowledge base to see whether we're doing the right thing.

Otherwise we get over-zealous. We get so eager to get to the task, we forget about whether we're doing it efficiently or effectively.

Yogi: We set ourselves goals and targets...

SUT: This is the nature of defilement: it looks for the result, it wants a result. How wisdom works is, it thinks about how it should do the work, what are the causal factors that are need to be fulfilled to do this work effectively? That's what wisdom thinks about, and tries to fulfill the causes.

Often it feels like people don't have enough information about meditation and they're sort of fighting in the dark sometimes.

And sometimes you ask the teacher, and the teacher will scold you and so you're afraid to ask!



Yogi: For many years I had been very proud about not taking any interest in the theory, just practice. Then I realized that something was not right with the practice. I decided I had better find out a little more. So Dhamma books, Dhamma discourses, chanting, discussions with dhamma friends... I've tried to read the same book three times, always getting to page 38... [Laughter] My friends want to talk with me about the Dhamma and I start yawning.

Is there a way to deal with this dullness that comes over every time I try to further my understanding?

SUT: Maybe because the mind had that previous idea that the theory is unimportant, that's still getting in the way of full interest in the peripheral knowledge around the practice. Just continue to make the efforts. When the mind starts to see the value of it, it will find more interest. I wasn't very interested in theory either. All I knew was that if I meditated it felt good. That's what I liked, that's all.

It was much later on in life that I realized that some of the theory was actually helpful for the practice and fed into the practice. When I saw the benefits of it, then I began to look for more information to read, and stuff like that. But initially, when I was practicing in my youth, I never bothered with the theory.

I had heard my teacher talk about impermanence for example, I wasn't interested in any other teachings at that time, only what my teacher taught me.

And so based on that, when I had some insights, after that, I thought 'what's this?' And I thought maybe I'd look it up. And when I looked it up the understanding of it was so incredible because I had had an insight into it, and then I became interested in reading more about the other stuff.

Right View

Yogi: I was experiencing a lot of pain, and the mind tries to find causes for it. And then, when I thought, okay, this is just pain, let me be aware of it. And the pain was still there but there was no suffering. There was still pain, but I was not fighting it.

SUT: [in English] Why? Normally we suffer. Now the mind not suffer. Why?

Yogi: Not resisting, not fighting?

SUT: Why? Why not resisting?

Yogi: I simply accept...

SUT: Why you accept? It's not because you tried to accept it. It's because suddenly the mind... you had that thought right? Why not just see it as it is. So that understanding is right view.

Yogi: Pain is inevitable, suffering's optional?

SUT: That's right. If you have the wisdom... If you don't have the wisdom it's not optional.

Another Yogi: It's just the mind that makes us suffer.

SUT: Yes, the mind can make you suffer, the mind can save you.



Yogi: Earlier on we talked about “Be 100% responsible for your own emotions and for your reactions to other people.” but then when this lady here says that she has jealousy, Sayadaw said, “Well, it's not yours.”

SUT: It's very simple. About jealousy it's right. Any emotion that arises in the mind is not 'my' emotion. It is an emotion that has arisen in the mind. But about the '100%' is also true. Any emotion that arises in the mind is 100% the responsibility of this mind. This mind has created the conditions for this emotion to arise with its views, its thoughts, its attitudes, and its ideas.

So it's all its own greed or whatever. It's all held in this mind. In the past it has gone through something that has resulted in this. And that's how that mind is responsible.

The reason we use the word 'I' is that we can only deal with this mind. This mind is our responsibility, so to speak. In all human relationships we naturally have the tendency when we get upset to blame the other person for what we feel. At least half!

We say things like, 'he hurt me', 'he made me angry', 'she did that', 'this is frustrating', and so on. We think that it is the outside that makes us feel this way but actually the reason that we feel the things the way we feel them is because of our judgments, ideas, preconceptions, and so on. We suffer the emotions that we have to suffer because of lack of wisdom and inability to think in the right way.

We see the gross level: we see someone come and call us a fool and we get angry, so we think that this person made me angry. But we don't see the subtle thought processes that go on: the identification with the self, the pride that doesn't want to be

called a fool, and all of that, that make this mind angry. That's what makes the mind angry, not the person calling you a fool.

We don't have this sort of knowledge, we don't have this sort of understanding, so in most situations we just attribute our emotions to everyone else, to every other thing, and we don't take responsibility for our own emotions, or this mind's emotions.

The lack in this mind is the lack of understanding of its own processes. That is the fault that lies within the mind.

In fact, although we spoke about 'my mind' being '100% responsible for my emotions', the use of 'I', 'me', 'my mind' and 'myself' are just references to this mind.

Yogi: And these qualities are just part of nature?

Interpreter: Yes, every mind has all these qualities.

Yogi: I created the conditions for it to arise.

Interpreter: 'I' did not create the conditions—

Yogi: The conditions were created for this particular mind.

SUT: In Theravāda there is the one they call the stream-enterer, the sotāpanna, the first level of being enlightened, one who is definitely going to reach nibbāna. For the stream-enterer the defilements have not all gone, they are still present. But the stream-enterer no longer has the wrong view

of what defilements are. They are just qualities of the mind. They are no longer personal.

And because of that understanding, the power of the defilements is much reduced. The defilements can never grow to a degree that would cause a stream-enterer to do something that would cause a person to go to the four woeful states. To become an animal, a hell-being, et cetera. So, you can see from this example of the stream-enterer that the first level is to have right view.



Samatha & Vipassanā

Yogi: I still couldn't find why I feel hot and sweating. Just after I feel hot and sweating I feel very uncomfortable, and then my mind is not that stable, so I'm not able to get answer for that.

SUT: Do samatha first. When you have some stability of mind from the samatha, do vipassanā. If the mind is not in the right mood you won't be able to use some borrowed wisdom to right the attitude. In that case just use samatha meditation to still the mind. If you're able to think about it and correct your attitude then you can just go straight into it. But if you are thinking about it and are not able to correct the attitude then go back and do some samatha.

Some people are able to think about it in the right way and instantly they feel better, they're able to observe and investigate. But some people cannot, then you have to use a neutral object.

If observing an object causes agitation in the mind, don't look at that object directly anymore. You have to observe the agitation. We have to adjust the mood of the mind.

There are two ways you can adjust the mood of the mind. You can adjust it with right thinking, right thought, right view. If that's not possible, then with samatha.

Yogi: So... the mind becomes one-pointed. You don't start going for other objects, the mind closed for that one point. But you don't choose one-pointedness, the mind goes for it. The question is, you don't 'take' the object.

Interpreter: I think it's also partly Burmese translation. In Burmese, when you say 'the mind just naturally paid attention to it', the literal translation is 'the mind took it as an object'.

SUT: If the mind is naturally going towards one-pointedness let it do that. But if you want to practise vipassanā then while the mind is one-pointed you can also realize that simultaneously the mind has not actually blocked out other things. Because the mind is all-knowing in fact even when it is one-pointed— there are things that the mind already knows that are in its consciousness.

For example some people when they are watching ānāpāna and a thought arises, and they look at the thought and the

thought disappears. But this is not what I want people to do. For example, the mind is naturally on the breath and a thought arises, they notice the thought naturally and then they just go on to the next moment. They don't try to change the attention of the thought. They know the breath, they know the thought and the next moment comes, maybe it's the breath, or the thought.

Yogi: But it keeps disturbing the one-pointedness if you look for the object.

Interpreter: It depends on your goal. If you want one-pointedness...

SUT: So you must get this clear: what you learn for jhāna practice is different from what you will learn in this retreat. Because the goals are different. If you want to develop one-pointedness then you have to allow your mind to naturally do that and not checking to see what else the mind knows etc.

If you want to do this practice whether now or later—when you've developed one-pointedness you can still switch to this sort of practice—at that time these are the things you will want to remember. That besides the things that the mind knows one-pointedly there are other things that the mind is also conscious of at the same time.

If you can be aware of the mind that is one-pointed, because the mind itself is one-pointed, you can know that mind, and from there you can then expand into all the other minds that

are already conscious. But that's for whenever you want to take up the practice. Don't get confused.

Satipaṭṭhāna

Yogi: There are both—no kind of distinction—**dhammānupassanā**, **cittānupassanā**, just whatever fits the situation that comes up?

SUT: In fact we must be skilful at understanding all four of the foundations. It's when we understand the first three that it is dhammānupassanā.

Yogi: What about if the mind inclines towards a certain object, towards a certain practice? Some people like to look at their mind, some people at the body.

SUT: From the standpoint of the mind you will eventually recognize everything. Because the mind knows body, the mind knows vedanā, and the mind knows mind.

Initially of course there is always the learning about each bit. We might find ourselves focused more on the body, more on the feelings, more on the mind. And once we understand

cause and effect and so on, we're looking at understanding relationships. That's dhammānupassanā as well.



Seeing & Looking

Yogi: While I'm walking out somewhere and I might be looking at a tree, or seeing a tree, can you tell me the difference? Is seeing something where you might get more attached to it? What is the difference between seeing and looking or are they the same?

SUT: Looking is when you intend to look at something, so when you have an intention to actually pick up something to look at it properly, that's looking. But in general you might not be trying to look at anything. Like when you're walking, you're not necessarily looking at anything. You kind of know where you're going, then seeing is happening. You have a much broader general view which is a bit blurred because you're not actually focusing on anything.

Now you look at her, but you can see other things also.

Yogi: And which mind is better for staying in awareness?

SUT: No object makes awareness better. Because the awareness has nothing to do with the object. Awareness is something you develop from practicing awareness, so whether you are aware of looking or seeing, you're aware. That's all.

Yogi: When seeing we have our eyes open unlike thinking, how to be aware of seeing consciousness? Is it the same thing, like pulling back, you see sort of the wide picture, not really out of focus but without focusing, and I'm wondering what that teaches me? How that helps me understand the world with seeing?

SUT: These are just like exercises that also help us to recognize something as an object, and there is the knowing. To realize which is mind, whether anything is personal, there is the seeing and there is the knowing.

And also because you are being aware, noticing this, of course your sati, samādhi, everything is developing. The fact that you are even being able to step back and recognize there is seeing, there is some wisdom there already, the fact that you are able to do it and you are not just involved in and can't separate sight from what is being seen. So that is right view already. So there is that sort of wisdom and we can recognize that as well in a different way from when we couldn't. This mind, this knowing and this object are happening but I'm not doing it.

[in English] I'm not seeing.

I'm not seeing but this phenomenon is happening. That's anatta.

SUT: What do you think? What do you talk? For me, I'm not trying to think.

Yogi: That was a reminder!

Sensual Pleasure

Yogi: When I was at one of the retreats, I was standing and enjoying the sunset and I was told not to because it was ‘sensual pleasure’. But in my opinion it gives me peace, or something like that.

SUT: Yes the Buddha Dhamma says that all this is sensual pleasure. But we can’t stop it. We can’t stop the mind from enjoying something. And what I teach is not to stop the mind from doing anything, but to recognize whatever the mind is doing. This practice is to recognize what is happening and observe it in order to understand it. Thus we would learn in this situation what the enjoying mind is like.

Once I was in Malaysia for a self retreat. I had gained quite a lot of momentum and for days I have been very much into the awareness of object and knowing mind. Then one night it rained and the whole forest surrounding that place was so

green. A man came up the mountain to the kuti, and he was like, “It’s so beautiful Sayadaw! It’s so beautiful!”

I came out of his kuti and I couldn’t understand what the man was talking about. I just couldn’t. I was looking to see what was beautiful, I couldn’t get himself over to that. Because the mind was just being aware, it wasn’t giving meaning and doing all those things it normally does. I could see it all, but that was it. It was just seeing. I was a bit bewildered for a while.

Yogi: So is that how we should react then?

Interpreter: No! There is no ‘should’. As it is.

SUT [in English]: Depends on your understanding level.

Interpreter: Whatever happens naturally. That’s what happened for him then, but tomorrow if he looked at the sun he might say, “Beautiful!”

Sickness

Yogi: I've been sick for the last few days and I've been using this time to meditate. But it's really hard when you can see the mind like a ball of wool... fuzzy... but if I am to sustain it... with the dribbling nose, the body aches and...

SUT: When we react, when we don't like what we're experiencing then the awareness cannot be continuous. It cannot be sustained. For me, I have been practising so long, and the practice is quite stable, when I gets sick the samādhi is better! The mind is not so busy any more.

The mind is more passive, not so interested in other things any more. Much stiller. Nothing's important anymore so the mind is more inside itself. The experience is very obvious so the mind is aware more easily, you don't even have to try, you just know everything.

Yogi: I can see that fuzzy mind but I can't sit still. So sleepy... In and out of sleep.

SUT: When the mind is not very strong in its awareness and all that, the body attacks the mind. So if the body is weak the awareness also weakens. When we're well the mind is like, 'Oh! I want to do this... I must do that...' but when the mind is sick, it's like 'Don't want to do anything... not interested in anything,' so the mind calms down!



Another Yogi: So is it because she has aversion?

SUT: The fact that she can't sit still shows that the mind is restless.

Yogi: And also because I'm on retreat, I want to get better.

SUT: Oh!

Yogi: But it's interesting, I've been doing the cooking, and I was doing it mindfully and suddenly this mind got cleared!

SUT: Because you stopped thinking of your sickness. You forget about sickness.

Skilful Awareness, Attitude

Yogi: In the guided meditation, Sayadaw mentioned ‘wholesome awareness’?

Interpreter: Oh, ‘wholesome awareness’. I translated it that way. He means that the awareness must be without defilements. Not greedy, like when you are trying to make something happen. Not having aversion in your awareness, trying to stop something happening. Some people can be aware of aversion with aversion, and then aware of that aversion with aversion...

SUT: Some people do that. They are meditating, they're being aware, and there's some subtle defilement that is constantly motivating them. For example, if you go on retreat, you're hoping to get something in the retreat. It's very subtle. Be aware if you're meditating with greed and aversion.

Interpreter: ‘skilful awareness’, that's a better term.

SUT: [in English] That's better. Because many people can't practice. They're not peaceful. Much suffering. That's why I am reminding.

The main thing I am trying to convey is that the mind that is practicing, the awareness, must be skilful awareness. Before just becoming mindful you have to check.

Yogi: I would like to ask Sayadaw to explain a little bit more about the attitude towards meditation because it seems to be much more crucial than the technique itself.

SUT: The attitude, whether you want to call it the attitude towards practice or the attitude in the practice, or the attitude within the practice, needs to be, again, without desiring something, without desiring a result, without aversion towards the process that has to be passed through, without delusion about the necessary process that has to be gone through. That's the bit about attitude in the meditation.

Everything that I explain is a little bit of information that is supposed to help you to have the right attitude when you are meditating, within the practice, whether it is reminding you not to have greed, aversion, and so on, or just explaining how the practice doesn't have to be a certain way. All the specific details I go into can at any time remind you of these things.

Remembering that what is happening is natural, that there's no need to change the experience, there's no need to control the experience, that it's happening as it is, that this is just cause and effect. There is no doer and stuff like that. All that is supposed to help.



Thinking is not a problem. Very often we think of thinking as papañca, 'this is a defilement, we should not be doing this while meditating', but then it becomes worse. So all that information feeds into the wisdom we can bring to the practice so that the right attitude can be held in the practice.

My teacher always said, "Don't try to do anything and don't try to prevent anything." When I say, "Don't do anything to it, don't try to prevent it." I am talking about the object, the experience. We have to work to be aware, to remain aware but

we mustn't use the awareness to try and change the experience.

Actually my teacher's instruction is complete, it's a three-liner: don't try to do anything, don't try to prevent anything, but don't forget what is happening.

When instructions are read we must also make sure we understand them in the right way.

Society, Family

Yogi: I think that would be a great power for good, if people who were looking at themselves then looked at society, and at the root causes in society. Is that a Buddhist perspective or not?

SUT: Yes. It's all about wisdom. Whether as an individual or as a group, at whatever level of society, from the individual level up to the policymaker's level, when there is wisdom the mind understands what is right and what is wrong. Then the mind will do what is beneficial, skillful, and good, and that will benefit everybody, depending on the level of influence that it has.

At each of our own levels once we have wisdom we can make a difference. When I was practicing at home, every Sunday my big family of ten brothers and sisters would gather at my mother's house and we would eat and then we would talk. We would come to visit our parents because we were all married

except for my sister. They would chatter about the latest cars, movie stars, and things like that. I would sit and listen and watch what was going on, because I was just being mindful, and I realized it was really quite a waste of time.

Then I thought about what could be done and slowly an idea formed in my head. One day I said, "Why don't we all meditate together?" All of us had meditated before because my father used to bring us all to monastery. So they said, "Yes, let's meditate."

We all sat for fifteen minutes initially. Then we would eat. After a while the idea crystallized, we were sitting more regularly, every time we met. After eating or during the meal I would suggest a discussion. And we would talk about life, whether we were happy or unhappy, what made us happy.

I would ask mostly them one by one, saying, "How do you feel about your life? Do you feel satisfied with your life?" One brother replied, "Fifty-fifty." Another, "Seventy-thirty." And one said, "I am not satisfied with my life at all." But they had never thought about it. They were just sort of going through life, time was passing by, and they'd never given any thought to how they were living their own lives.

From one week to the next the questions would continue: if you're not happy with your life, how do you make yourself happy? How do we deal with it? And bringing the Dhamma into it, it became a regular Dhamma discussion.

At that time I was very powerful in my family. [Laughter] Everybody knew I had been practicing continuously. Whenever I said something, it made a difference to them. They didn't dispute it because obviously I had been watching it a lot longer than they had. There was some authority.

When my brother who lives in America visits Burma he sweats because it's hot in Burma. Whenever he sweats he takes off his watch and puts it down somewhere. He was not very mindful, so he puts it down here or there. I didn't really look but I was mindful, so as I pass by I notice the watch here or there. It's not that I try to remember but I notice where it is. I'll see my brother bobbing around and I'll ask, "What's wrong?"

"I can't find my watch."

"It's in the kitchen."

That's the first day. On the second day, "Oh, it's in the bedroom on the left side." And then on the third day, my brother asked, "How do you know?"

Because they knew I had been practicing so much, my brother thought that I had some psychic power. Actually I had just noticed where the watch was. Just awareness and memory working. Every time I saw the watch the mind would just say, 'Oh, this is my brother's watch.' And I would know that the mind had said that.

When we recognize the mind that comments on our experiences, then the memory the remembering of it,

becomes strong. Sometimes the mind repeats it two or three times and it becomes stronger. If you want to remember something, just repeat it many times.

Yogi: Sometimes when we hear the news and we see fighting and people throwing stones at each other and killing each other, you sort of wish somehow that they too would have the good fortune to receive the Dhamma.

SUT: Yes. To each his own. We all come with our kamma. The natural law is that the mind gets what it gets, what it deserves. So you have to work to make the mind deserve better. So **sīla**, right practice. And there's momentum when you do more and more wholesome things. Then the desire to continue to do more and more wholesome deeds grows and feeds itself, and more and more wholesomeness then arises in the mind.

When I began practicing at home myself I didn't believe the practice could take me this far. I just kept doing it. And then at some point there was a spark, an epiphany, and I kept going and it brought me on. So the practice will bring it to all of us. We just have to keep going. We all have the potential. And that's why we're all practicing so hard.

Yogi: I'm a schoolteacher, often you have a child, a student, and you have an aversion towards his personality. So is that the same challenge? Is it mindful to recognize the aversion and maybe avoid the student? [Laughter]

SUT: Change your mind, change your idea. You are not this child. The child is the child. How can you be the same? How can the child be the way you want? Let the child be how he or she is. So this is going to be their personality, this is going to be a part of what they're like. See it as it is.

Yogi: I teach juvenile prisoners... In order to develop mindfulness, do I therefore try to create a situation where I can actually feel warmth for them?

SUT: When you can understand it, when there is enough wisdom pertaining to this situation, the child's defilements, and so on, if you have the wisdom to feel wholesome towards this person, you will—depending on the situation—feel either mettā, compassion, **muditā** or **upekkhā** towards the person. But it really depends on you, it just requires for the aversion not to be there. Once the aversion is not there other things are possible. Take responsibility for your own anger.

Yogi: Are you saying to be neutral to the person?

SUT: If we are able, if we have the ability, of course it's much more peaceful for us. But only if we have the ability. It doesn't mean you don't care about them. It means when they are

doing something terrible you understand that's what's happening to them, you don't feel affected.

Parents need to be with their children, maybe very badly behaved children, and be able not to be affected by the child,



not take it personally. Understand that this is where the child is right now and not be swayed either way.

Yogi: Would it be helpful in that situation to focus on the child's defilements? I was wondering if it would be helpful, instead of seeing that child as angry, or destructive, or whatever, to look at it more that this poor person is generating anger or aversion, and that's causing this situation? If you are able to, sometimes you can't.

SUT: We must understand the nature of delusion.

All my life I could not love my father a lot. When I was young, I was uncontrollable, very naughty, and I was beaten a lot. Of the ten children my father had, I was the most rebellious. My father would lock me in the toilet in the dark and I wouldn't be afraid, so it didn't matter. He would beat me, and I would be in pain at that time, but then I would go do whatever I wanted and get beaten again. I got beaten a lot.

I loved my father, I do naturally, but I couldn't love him a lot. It didn't come. Much later, when I was practicing at home and the practice had become quite developed—before I became a monk—I began to understand the nature of moha, delusion, then I began to understand what had led to that.

My father did the best thing he knew, he didn't know how to deal with this child and that had led to this situation. Then I felt more warmth towards my father.

Yogi: I've worked with difficult children too, and I found that first of all you have to establish a relationship... I've never found a child yet who didn't have some good side to them, not just defilements. And then you just work with that, and try to nurture that. That would be my view.

SUT: All these children, they also function from the place of whatever they understand, and they might have wrong understanding. What they can't understand, they can't produce. They can't function out of that space, so that's where

they're at. So what you can help them to do is to understand a bit more.

The idea of a relationship is very important because that allows you to see. I was so naughty at home, my father would go and complain about me in the monastery. But my teacher was very good with me so... I was good at meditating and all... The teacher would always say to my father, "There is good in the child." [Laughter]

But at my teacher's monastery I was very good, because my teacher never told me what was negative, he only pointed out the positive to me. So I would tell everything to my teacher, what I had done wrong, because I had no fear that my teacher would reprimand me or say, 'This is not right.' My teacher would only listen and then point out the good.

Yogi: Usually when I'm interacting with people I can see or feel subtle emotions coming up, and so I have time to look at them. But with my 15 year old son—we have a good relationship, but... It's like fire and anger, and by the time you stop, it's burning.

And he's the most important one. I can practice right speech with complete strangers but when it comes to the one who really matters... And it's the same with parents, it's just... it's a disaster!

SUT: Whenever you see your son or think of your son, but particularly when you see your son—do this every time—notice what you’re feeling when you see him. And then when you notice your feelings you will slowly begin to see what expectations you have of him, what desires you have for him, and what your attitudes are towards him. You will notice all these things, all your inner stuff relating to him, and then you will be able to change the ideas that are there.

If you didn’t think of him as your son but as a human being your attitude might be different. Don’t think ‘I made this human being’, don’t think that he came because you called him! He came because of his kamma.

When my son was born I was practicing very hard in lay life, I had been practicing intensively for almost three years by the time my son was born. When they brought the baby to me I looked at it, I didn’t really think, ‘this is my son’. I thought, ‘Wow, a human has come into being’.

Interpreter: I asked him, “How is your son?” and he said, “He’s fine.” Everybody in his family comes to complain about his son and says he’s very naughty, but Sayadaw doesn’t think he’s naughty so he can empathize with his son.

SUT: My son played truant, he didn’t go to school and I understood completely. He can’t cope with the studies so he didn’t go to school. I asked him, “Why didn’t you go to school? Aren’t you getting help with this subject?” And he said, “It’s a

very difficult subject and I don’t want to go to school because I can’t understand.”

Instead of trying to find a way to help him to understand the topic, instead of finding someone to help him understand, the adults scold him. What’s the point of doing that?

Working under a wise boss is always much easier. You have more freedom when he’s there. All the subordinates suffer under an unwise boss.

Yogi: So we have to be like a wise boss when dealing with people?

SUT: Yes, we should try to do that. If somebody scolds us and then we scold the next person it’s like a chain reaction.

My brother is a pharmacist in America, and he was telling me about the training they get to serve customers. They’re told, “Remember they’re sick, they have to part with their money, they have to buy the medication, they’re feeling awful, they’re not going to say anything.” So they’re much more accepting when customers come. It’s about attitude. When you’ve prepared yourself to accept, it’s much easier.

Yogi: Yes, everything after that is a bonus isn’t it? When you start from the worst possible scenario.

SUT: That’s why we have to expect the worst and do our best.

We always do our best with strangers because we have very few expectations of them. And it’s partly because we already

believe that we can't make them do what we want. With our family, however, we want them to do what we want. Expectation and attachment.

The people who hurt us most—of course really, at the primary level, we hurt ourselves—but the people that we feel hurt us the most are always the people closest to us. The closer they are the more they are able to hurt us.

It is very seldom that a stranger really hurts us and yet we are more careful and more aware with strangers, with the people we meet once in a while, than with our family, whom we see all the time.



We don't pay attention, we don't think it's important for us to be mindful with our family. Actually, it's the most important at home.

Yogi: Could it be that we take our family for granted? That we don't appreciate the love they give us all the time?

SUT: Yes, that's right, we take our family for granted. For example, very often mothers will do something carefully, with much love, for their children, and the children...

When I began to practice at home, I started to realize the little things that parents do for us, and to feel gratitude for these things. How parents always keep their children in mind. And I really began to love them very much and appreciate all the little things that parents do because they feel for their children. Then my parents would also feel it, they would notice. They also appreciate the love they get in return and then they do more! They would sneak me little things to eat...

We often don't know how to make people love us. When we do everything with awareness we start to notice and learn these things. Everything comes together. You can't miss anything if you're doing everything with awareness.

Yogi: One thing I've realized by myself is that, especially with the people very close to us, we tend to have expectations. And then I started to reflect and see what my patterns were doing, and how difficult it is to actually change patterns. And what arose was compassion, and that changed the whole thing around.

SUT: That's really true. We're usually so self-absorbed. We usually have no time to consider what it must be like for the other person. We are so self-absorbed by what we want from

the other person that, as you said, we don't notice our own feelings as well.

When your mind is calmer there's more space to see other points of view. Initially we're so caught up in our own reactions again and again and again, that it just agitates the mind. We believe them and get caught up in them. But once there is an ability to step away and ask how to do things differently, then there's more calmness, and you can see it more clearly.

The nature of wisdom is always to be able to see both sides of the coin, never just one side. Always to realize there's another face: not just their view and my view, also past, present and future.

Specific Characteristics

Yogi: If you have worked hard for something and you succeed, you feel high. What is it? Is that craving? What's present there?

SUT: Just start with what you can. It's not so much for me to tell you what characteristics to expect because then you'll look for those and you won't notice something that you might find out for yourself.

For example, we know greed. We know when we are feeling greedy. But at first all we can recognize is that there is greed. We don't really know any of its specific characteristics and all that. Then if we keep watching we might notice when we eat something, for example, we feel it's not enough. We want more. That's a characteristic of greed.

Greed never feels that anything is enough. It always thinks there should be more. So we keep putting things on our plate and after a while we look and it's too much. But these are

things you must discover on your own. If I tell you something then you only see that thing and it won't be the pleasant surprise of discovery that you get from your own experience.

There are signs peculiar to each emotion. Anger wants to destroy, it wants to put away, it doesn't want to see something anymore. That's why people kill other people. That's very gross anger.

Yesterday night I was talking about compassion and anger, dosa. And a lot of people don't seem to realize that dosa is not just anger. In English the word 'anger' is something quite gross, but dosa is everything up to a very subtle degree. If you're sad, that's dosa. If you're disappointed, that too is dosa.

[in English] Depression is also dosa.

When there is not wanting something, there's dosa.

SUT: I will talk about one of the natures of the object. For example, when there is thought, then we recognize there's thinking. In the beginning when we see thoughts, what we instantly see is the story, the thought is the story, the thought is the characters, the involvement of ourselves, and so on.

As we continue to allow ourselves to observe and recognize 'there is thinking, this is thinking', it can get to the point where you realize this is an object because it is being observed. It suffers being observed, and therefore it's an object. And understanding that is understanding the nature of

what an object is, it just has to suffer being observed. So there's always these two natures, that of being known, having to be known, and that of knowing.

With regard to thought, when we see this nature of thought, we can see that we have understood one fundamental nature of thought, that it is an object. The object nature of thought. And that's not the only nature that belongs to thought: thought is also anatta, thought is also anicca. All this is there. You could have understood that aspect of its nature, that it is an object, and then you might understand that it comes and it goes. We begin to understand different aspects of it.

You know about the three characteristics, anicca, dukkha, and anatta. These are called **sāmañña-lakkhaṇa**, the ordinary signs or characteristics. In addition there is the **sabhāva-lakkhaṇa**, the natural or fundamental characteristic of something, the characteristic unique to that object. For example, greed has the ordinary characteristics that belong to all objects, to all objects and all minds, that is to say, everything: anicca, dukkha, and anatta. But there is also the fundamental characteristic of each object. The specific characteristics of greed has attachment, that sort of thing—

[in English] Sticky.

It's sticky. And then anger wants to destroy, push away. These are the fundamental characteristics, the ones specific to that object.

As we observe everything, what we ultimately want to find out is what we can glean from this observation. What does the mind eventually understand about the fundamental nature or characteristic of each experience? For example, we watch ānāpāna, we watch ānāpāna for ages, what do we understand about it? What is it like? Do we understand its peculiarities, its behaviour, the way it changes? Do we understand our ānāpāna?



That's why the guiding motivation behind our observation is so important. If all we want is to develop peace we will never understand things, because that was not what we set up the mind to do. When we are curious and we actually want to understand the mind then we look at it quite differently from when we are using it as a tool to be peaceful. When we use it

as a tool to be peaceful that's what we do, we just use it, we're not curious about it. It's the difference between being with a person as if they were servant or if you want to know them better.

That's why the initial goal of samatha is just that, to develop peace. Whereas for vipassanā, right from the start, you are not there to find peace. You are curious.

Many of us meditators spend years watching our ānāpāna, our rising falling, even in vipassanā watching rising falling, and we don't understand anything because we never begin with a curious outlook. We begin by thinking 'we will calm down, we must calm down, if we don't calm down it's a problem!' We think that meditation will only happen once we are calm.

Yogi: We think we are only allowed to start vipassanā once we are calm!

SUT: Even when it's not calm vipassanā can be done.

If the knowledge is not mature, yes, peace is a support to vipassanā practice. But I want to emphasize that regardless of whether or not there is peace, vipassanā can happen, vipassanā practice can be done.

In vipassanā, you must remember that there are always the knowing and the known minds. So the known minds, the rest of the mind, don't have to be calm, they don't have to be peaceful, they could be angry, raging, all that can be going on. All that needs to be steady is the knowing. That's the only

steadiness that you need, the steadiness of the watching mind. The rest of the minds can do what they want.

Fundamentally for the knowing, watching mind, for the awareness to be stable, right view is needed. Right view stabilizes the mind.

What samādhi does is calm down the all of the rest of the minds. Samādhi calms down everything else that the mind is experiencing, all the happening minds. But to calm the watching mind only right view is necessary.

[n English] [As long as you're] able to watch it's okay.

It's enough just to be able to observe the storm.

Spiritual Urgency

Yogi: The other day Sayadaw was saying something about suffering. And somebody else mentioned that if there wasn't so much suffering what would be the interest for practice? And then we talked about urgency. I was just wondering what kind of urgency—

Interpreter: Spiritual urgency.

SUT: If we don't have suffering in our life, it's still possible for the sense of spiritual urgency to arise out of the knowledge and wisdom that come from the practice itself. We might be practicing for other mundane reasons, because we like the practice or stuff like that, and because we are sincerely practicing insights come to us. And those insights then give us a kick-start. Something hits us one day, and we just feel it's really important.

Any insight into the nature of impermanence, dukkha or anatta can give rise to a strong sense of urgency as well.

SUT: Samvega (urgency) is also a kind of wisdom. Some of the understandings of the fundamental nature or the general characteristics of experience can lead to urgency, to a sense that you must finish this far.

For example, if we understand that we can't escape experience itself, we can't escape having to experience, and the very oppressiveness that we are constantly needled by, this having to experience, having to experience and experience and experience, if we felt that was dukkha, how fast would we run towards the path?

Step Back

Yogi: I have been on a long retreat and I had very strong agitation. So I asked the teacher what I could do about it and he just said, ‘Step back in your head. So expand your consciousness in your head.’ And it was just like a miracle, I didn’t have it anymore. I was able to do that, once I’d got too tight it just get expansive. I wondered whether Sayadaw could comment on that.

SUT: In fact, when we are agitated we are too involved with trying to watch the agitation, probably we are too involved in it, the object. And stepping back actually brings us back to the expansive mind. It also allows you to know that this is an object rather than being the object, being agitation or watching agitation. So, subconsciously once you step back the understanding that what you were involved in before is actually just an experience is already there.

When I tell people to step back, some yogis say sometimes they can step back, sometimes they can’t. Sometimes you try and you are just not able to step away.

Some Mahayana practitioners told me that they were taught to tell themselves to let go. All these techniques are based on wisdom. It’s actually bringing in right view in a sense. They also experience this, sometimes they can just do it and sometimes they can’t. It is very simple, it is how much wisdom is in the mind at that time. When the mind can move into that mode of wisdom it occurs naturally and sometimes there are so many defilements in the mind, that it is not able to find that wisdom. Sometimes, it's just a little bit of defilement but you can’t find the wisdom.



It's only when we can understand what that sort of stance is, when there is an understanding of it in the mind already, that we can actually practice it, whether it's letting go or stepping back. Without the understanding, which is the wisdom, we can't do it. You'll notice that the stance of wisdom is always a distant stand, it's either watching from the side or watching from the back or overview. It's always a broader perspective, it's never involved. Wisdom doesn't step into it, it is always stepped away.

But all defilements are very sticky. They stick to the object. They grasp it, they want to feel it, be into it. Wisdom always steps away. When you practise vipassanā sometimes it feels like you keep walking away from something so we are walking backwards, stepping away from the experience. So that everything is just happening when you are stepping away. There are people that are trying so hard to get into what they are watching so they are immediately forward in there...

There is this big Buddha on the mountain side in Hong Kong and the Buddha sits in a posture with one of his hands is up, it's a mudra, but it's just up as if saying stop. I looked at the Buddha and to me the Buddha was saying, 'don't get involved in the object'. The Buddha said in the whole of saṃsāra we have been following the objects. Stop now!

When a yogi is too involved in the object, in the thing that is being observed, a lot of expectation and aversion comes up. You want it to be this way, you don't want it to be this way... A lot of this comes up when you are involved with the object.

But when a yogi watches the watching more, watches the mind more, the way it observes and so on, the yogi learns how the mind works and learns to become skillful at using the mind and recognizing the mind and its patterns. So you become more skillful at knowing how to practice.

Yogi: 58:10 How do we get involved in the world in things that really matter, if the practice tells us to step back from the object?

SUT: Maybe you misunderstand what it means by stepping back. Even if you wanted to do something that is worth doing in the world, you would want to step back away from it so that you could survey and regard what you need to do.

Like when you do work, 'what's urgent?', 'immediate?', 'for later?', you need to step back so you can use your wisdom to decide what to do, what's important, what should be done, what shouldn't be done and so on. You do the work but you don't throw yourself into it and just carry on without knowing whether you are doing the right thing or not.

It's the same principle at work. So you are not running away from the world, you are stepping back to give yourself the opportunity to do it right. So you are not attached to it. You don't take that action because of your attachment to it, you don't take that action because you are angry, you don't take

that action out of a deluded state of mind. You do it because it's the right thing to do, the wise thing to do.

Yogi: Isn't there a kind of risk that we will lose the human spontaneity when we are watching the experience, be aware, all the time stepping back?

SUT: When you become skillful, you become more spontaneous. When you love you will know how to really love, without attachment, purely. Maybe we misunderstand 'stepping back'. It doesn't mean distancing from, it means not being so attached, attached with defilement, and at the same time a wise involvement.

When there is wisdom all wholesome states are more able to arise and with great energy. So all wholesome states will be more present. So if you love you will really love, not a grasping love or a controlling love but a real giving love.

The English word 'detachment' conjures up feelings of not loving, but when there is wisdom in the mind it's not like that. When the mind is truly understanding it is not detachment in that sense, just not a grasping.

Talking

SUT: When we all begin our meditation trainings, we have so many instructions, 'don't move', 'don't do this', 'don't think',we get a lot of this.

As in the guided meditation yesterday, I reminded you not to try to stop ourselves from thinking or don't trying to sit still. We are just trying to be aware, everything else is free form.

Not even trying not to talk. Instead of making the effort with what we have to do inside, instead of positive effort to actively try to be aware, we are making negative efforts, to stop things outside so that we can do this. So we are working funnily in a negative way. Trying to stop things so that this will happen, instead of not trying to stop anything and just trying to be aware.

It shouldn't be noble silence, it should be noble talking. Noble means it's wise, so then you have to think before you speak, so you have to be aware of what you are thinking, what you want to say, you have think about whether it is something wise to

say. Is it the right time, right person to speak to? Should we say this? Is it necessary? Wisdom should lead the parade. That's what the Buddha said. The Buddha didn't say, 'Don't speak.' The Buddha said when you speak, speak with awareness and wisdom. Otherwise people think of noble silence as keeping silent, 'I must not speak.'



There was a bhikkhu who came to the Centre and he wanted to practice talking meditation, this bhikkhu wanted to learn to speak mindfully and was trying very hard to practice speaking mindfully at the Centre. Then he went to do sitting meditation and someone came to speak to him and he got pissed off.

I said to him, “What is meditation? What are you doing?” This bhikkhu realized that he had this concept that if he was sitting for meditation nobody must talk to him. But meditation is in fact about being aware of whatever happens.

Yogi: Could you speak more about how to know if you are speaking properly? What are the characteristics? Are you happy or joyful? If you don’t get sucked into the story what are you aware of?

SUT: Everything! Good feeling, good tone, what you are thinking, what you are feeling, the tone of your voice, your thoughts, your action, your face, everything. First you must be mindful before starting to speak and then be mindful as you start speaking, and with practice you will be aware of everything. The more skillful you become at being mindful when you speak, the more skillful your speech will become, and the more meaningful your speech will be.

Yogi: Would a good way of knowing that you’re speaking skillfully be if you are really listening to the other person, giving your all to the other person?

SUT: Yes, definitely. For example, if there is greed to talk, if someone is too eager to put across their point of view, they stop being able to listen properly. Sometimes somebody else will say something but they don’t even hear it. They are so busy thinking about what they want to say that it bounces off their ears. It does not go into their head. They hear it but they don’t absorb it.

Yogi: I’m already aware that so many patterns of talking are aversion, complaining about the weather, politicians. It’s all aversion.

SUT: Complaining is a very dangerous practice because it reinforces itself. It becomes a habit and then it gets stronger. We think that we feel better after venting, but the need to do it again and again is dangerous.

Yogi: Are we limited to constructive discussions when practicing noble talking?

SUT: Just be mindful, because you can’t control speech. In life we will not always be able to choose our conversations but in retreat we have the choice. In daily life when we have to speak we need to remember how to be aware so that we learn to become wiser and wiser in our speech. This is a time to practice. It might sometimes go horribly wrong. If it does go horribly wrong then learn from it. That’s all we can do, learn from things.

Yogi: Sometimes when we speak and listen to a person we’re so intent and we forget to be mindful because we are so focused on the conversation.

SUT: Both in speaking and listening we need to remember to keep our attention on ourselves, and not to pay so much attention to the person who is speaking when they are speaking because that takes too much energy. If you stay with

yourself you will still hear the person, but you can remain aware. So you must remember to keep bringing the attention back to yourself, both when you speak and when you listen.

Yogi: To stay with the body, to stay with yourself?

Interpreter: Anything inside yourself, mind and body.

Yogi: Are you saying we should only pay attention to ourselves? Both when listening and speaking? That we shouldn't worry about the tone and the body language of the other person?

SUT: Pay attention mostly to yourself, the rest will be noticed automatically. You don't have to do it on purpose. The mind will do it naturally.

Yogi: It's like when somebody says something and instead of paying attention to all the negative things, all the dull things, you just keep your attention with yourself, you don't react.

SUT: If you remain interested in your reactions and not interested in what the person is saying, you will hear the complaints and dull things and all, but your interest will be in your reactions, you'll have something interesting to do while that person goes on.

Yogi: What if I start feeling angry that that person is saying something that's not right?

SUT: If they are saying something that's not right, that's their business. There is never a good reason to be angry. We choose

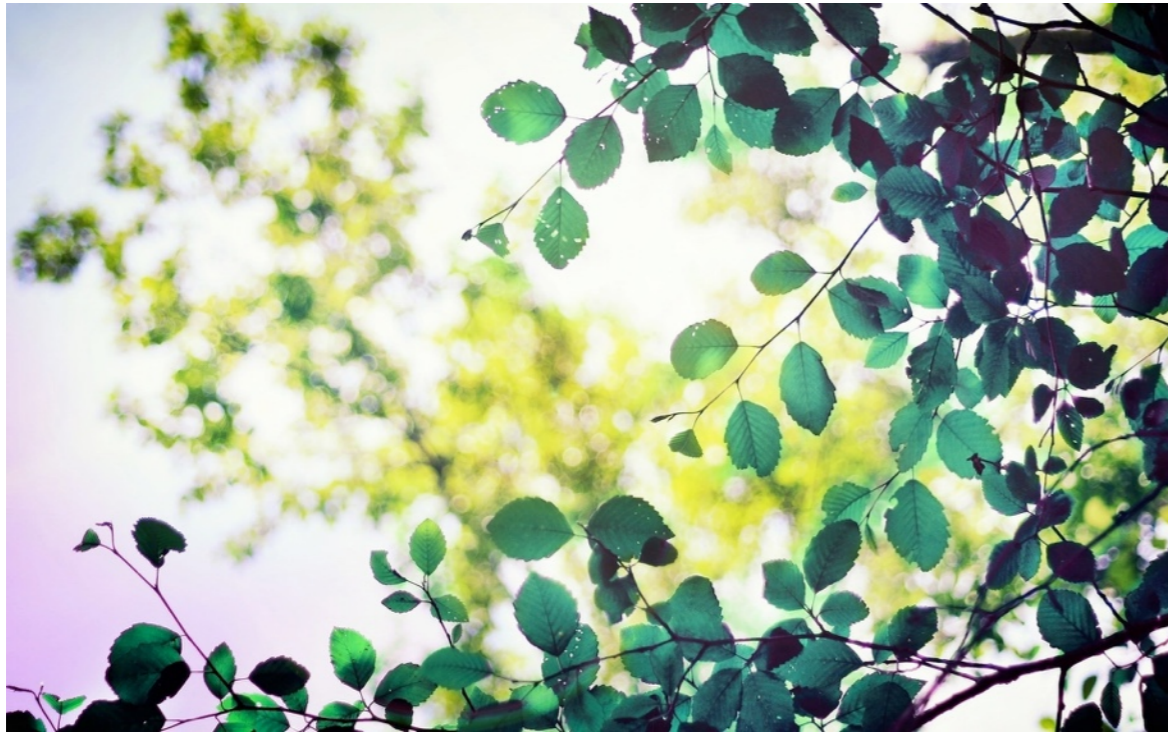
to get angry, but there is never anything we should get angry about.

Yogi: I find it much easier to understand what is happening in my mind when we're talking than when I'm in meditation.

SUT: Yes, it's easier. When we talk, we have to think before we talk so it's obvious. When we want to say something to someone, we have to know our attitude and what we want to convey to that person. If we have the wrong attitude then we're going to burn that conversation, burn that bridge.

Our attitudes are in everything. We have preconceived ideas, we've already made assumptions about that person, where that person is coming from, their motivations, et cetera. Instead of doing that we would do better to come with a simple attitude, 'What does this person want?'

As parents it's worse because one of the common things parents have in mind when they speak with their children is 'you've got to listen to me!'



Yogi: I'm noticing is that my mindfulness is not really there when I'm talking. Before I talk I might plan to be mindful, but when I'm talking I lose it because I'm too interested in what's happening and there also is greed involved. I'm aware of that after, but during the time it's too intense.

SUT: It's very good you noticed that. It's good that even though you think you're not aware there's some little bit of remembering and you're able to reflect afterwards and know that there was greed, and know that the mind lost its awareness because it was too interested, and things like that. You can reflect on these things and learn from them, and prepare yourself for the next conversation.

You're beginning to understand things about how mindfulness operates during a conversation. People learn from these conversations, even if it's afterwards.

Remind yourself that what you're bringing into the conversation is your awareness. You're not speaking because you want to talk but because you want to be aware. Because of habit you won't be able to do it, but if you remind yourself to do this before every conversation it will slowly sink in. This new habit of being aware while you speak can take over. It depends which of the two—the desire to be aware or the desire to speak—is stronger. The stronger one will prevail.

When we don't speak for the whole day, particularly if we're holding back, then the urge to speak can become quite strong. So remember to adjust the attitude: 'I am speaking to practice awareness.'

Know the awareness, know that you are aware before you begin speaking, and continue to check that awareness is still there, that you're still aware.

The most important mind is the awareness itself. We really have to recognize it's there, appreciate it's there, acknowledge it's there—so that it is there! [Laughter]

When we laugh, knowing that we're laughing, knowing that we know we're laughing. Whatever we know is fun, just know it because it's important to know. If we develop this habit of knowing whatever comes up and knowing that we're knowing, it becomes easier to know in daily life.

Teacher

Yogi: I wonder if Sayadaw would just talk about relationship with teachers, and how that might change over a course of training. What is a proper relationship with a teacher?

In the beginning of my spiritual life I wanted a teacher who would tell me everything so I wouldn't have to think for myself. And then that went into where I more or less wanted an advisor. And now it's sort of pick-and-choose kind of thing.

SUT: Yes, that's how it is. In my relationship with my teachers initially I didn't know anything about Dhamma or meditation, and I relied on my teacher for information, guidance, and instruction. Once my own practice had become quite strong and skilful, I didn't ask my teacher so much for advice about the practice. If I had some difficulty I would try to find my own way first. If it was really difficult I would go and see whether I could get a different perspective from him.

I appreciated any sort of contact with my teacher. Even if we weren't talking about my practice, or anything specifically to do with me, my teacher was a storehouse of Dhamma information. You could learn something from anything.

There were times when I would see him every evening. I'd give him some massage and just talk about everything under the sun. He would say one or two things, and whatever came out of him was like the sounding of a bell.

Later on when I was teaching, every evening I would go and tell him about it. After a while, he might be busy or something and he told me, "Tell me if there is something important." There wasn't the necessity to tell him everything about all the yogis any more.

Then, when I was going every once in a while, my teacher would give me his whole attention because he knew that if I had come it was important. So the relationship changes.

Sometimes I would go simply to be with him. He would be busy with someone or something else. It's not that I had conversations with him, but just watching the way he dealt with people and situations, the things he chose to do, where he sat and how he sat, everything spoke to me.

Once I was talking to my teacher and I was very busy and involved in talking to him. At one point my teacher suddenly said, "So-and-so is coming." And I was shocked. How did he know?

Then I heard the sound of a car running outside. I realized my teacher had already heard the car. It was then that it struck me how he must have this bird's eye view of everything going on. He would never get so fully involved in something to the exclusion of everything else. He knew everything going on in his environment and he acknowledged whatever came up as well.

And then I wondered a bit further. I thought, yes, there's a car running outside, how did he know it was that particular person? After some thought I realized it was the particular sound of a particular car. Every time the sound of this car comes, this person arrives. It's not that my teacher was psychic. He sits there in his kuti every day doing the same thing.

[in English] Never looking!

With experience his mind just knows.

There are many people who think Shwe Oo Min Sayadawgyi was psychic. But I know he wasn't psychic but that he had a lot of wisdom. And because of his wisdom he knew and understood things. If it had been just a matter of being psychic I wouldn't find it as impressive as the wisdom at work.

Yogi: How can a student develop a good, wholesome relationship with a teacher? Because there are traditions where the teacher is never questioned. It becomes difficult.

SUT: It's true, there can be conflict in teacher-student relationships when there is no wisdom on the part of the student or no wisdom on the part of the teacher. That's why I don't want to be a teacher.

[in English] I'm not guru, I'm not special. Just sharing.

I am just sharing, very honestly, very simply. Whatever I know, I share. I have no wish to impose my views on you, 'this is right and you must do it'. I'll give you what you like about the practice. If you like it, I will tell you more. If you don't like it, who cares, you can leave it, it's okay.

Yogi: How important does Sayadaw think it is to stick with one teacher? We have a million and one Dhamma talks in our computers and all that. And sometimes it's really confusing, I like to listen to talks then a kind of fear arises in me—'Should I do this? Or should I do that?' Should we stick with one teacher or try to gather all the information?

SUT: There's no hard and fast rule. Basically, what you need is a good teacher. If you find your teacher beneficial for you, then that's what you do. Just remember not to close all the doors.

I practiced with my own teacher for a long time, from when I was a child. For me my teacher was a like a confidant. I would try other things and come back and tell my teacher about it

and have my teacher's view on it. Not that as a young child or a teenager I necessarily listened to everything my teacher said. But when I got older, when I had more experience in meditation, it all came back to me. I tried many things, I am not saying that you must, just let your own wisdom decide what's right for you all the time, in every moment. My own teacher said to me, when you have a sleeve you finish it by sewing a seam, don't sew the seams on your teachers, that is to say, don't stop learning.

Yogi: I think there are a lot of people out shopping these days.

SUT: That's because their own wisdom is not strong, so maybe they are looking for something that resonates with them. This happened in the Buddha's time too, the Kalama Sutta talks about it. At that time the Buddha was there and now the Buddha is not here. So ask yourself if your greed or aversion is increasing? Do you feel your awareness, your samādhi, the good qualities of your mind getting better day by day?

If you are in an environment with a teacher where the good qualities of the mind are getting better, you're finding more and more about how to deal with the negativities and so on, then stay there. When you think of something, and even the thought of it disturbs the mind, then don't think of it that way, don't follow that thought.

What we need to do is cultivate our own awareness, samādhi, and wisdom, and wisdom will lead us, it will show the way, what's right and what's not. Your mind is your own teacher. This mind is the teacher, but it is also its own student.



Thinking/ The Intention to Think

Yogi: In this practice, I've found that after sitting for a while my mind gets still, very calm, it continues for a long time, and then suddenly a thought comes and then I'm aware of the thought, and then that thought goes with another thought related to that subject, maybe it is food. [Laughter] And then another one comes. It's like opening the floodgates. And then I see it going and going and going, and this is not only today's food or yesterday's food, it's any food I have ever consumed!

SUT: So what happens when you're aware of all this?

Yogi: When I'm aware of it? More food thoughts!

SUT: If you're interested in the subject of the thought, then your mind will think more about the subject.

You need to recognize the functioning of the mind, that the mind is thinking, and not get into the subject of the thought.

Yogi: Should I think 'this is not interesting for me', or something like that?

SUT: No, not like that. Just know, mind is happening, mind is happening.

There was another yogi sitting in meditation, he had a thought about something, and continued thinking about that subject. He didn't stop being aware, he was aware, mind was thinking about this. He finished the sitting session and went to do walking meditation and the mind stopped thinking about the subject. Then the yogi came back for another sitting session and the thought continued from where it had left off! [Laughter]

It shows that the mind is interested in the subject matter of that thought. It wants to think about it. When the mind thinks continuously and we're aware of it, then it's not enough to just know the mind is thinking, we have to see the intention to think. The mind wants to think, the desire to think is also there. Only when the desire to think is less will the thinking become less.

Now you are seeing the subject matter, it may be food, and it keeps coming, but you don't recognize that the mind likes this and wants to keep generating this. Sometimes if we ask ourselves, "Why is the mind thinking so much?" Then we might detect the desire to think.

Another yogi was watching her mind thinking and asked herself that question, ‘Why is the mind thinking so much?’ She realized it was because it wanted to entertain itself. Once we know the cause, that usually stops it.

When we look at thoughts we can understand things surrounding them, for example cause and effect, right or wrong, good or bad. It doesn’t matter that there’s thinking, there can be thought, but what can we understand about it? What can we understand about what’s happening?

Yogi: If I have the thought that it’s ‘not right’ and I’m aware of it, then that’s just another object.

SUT: Right. Yes. Why do we want to recognize thoughts? So that we can begin to recognize whether thoughts are wholesome or unwholesome, necessary or unnecessary, so that we can make wise choices about what goes through the mind.

We want that sort of understanding to arise.

Yogi: In formal meditation or just in daily life I find myself getting lost in thought without being aware. Sometimes you become aware that you are aware, then you find you’re lost in thought again, then again you become aware. In Sayadaw’s teaching there is no primary object to come back to, so how to help make the lost-in-thought less and the being-aware more.

SUT: There are several reasons for getting lost in thought. First, sometimes we just get lost in thought, you can’t help that, so forget about it. When you realize that you have got lost in thought just start being aware again, you can have a primary object if you want, or not.

The second reason for getting lost in thought is when we try to observe thinking but we don’t know how to recognize that thinking is the mind, that thinking is an object. Instead we look at what the thoughts are about and then we get sucked into thinking. If the tendency is to do that, then don’t spend too much time observing thought. Recognize there is thought and then be aware of other things as well.

And then the third way to deal with it is to be aware of the awareness when you are observing a thought. If you are able to remember the awareness when observing a thought, you are less likely to get sucked in because you are aware of the presence of the awareness. But if you can’t do that then, again, you will get sucked into the thought.

Yogi: While the mind is resting in awareness it seems difficult to have a thought. Often the instruction is to ‘watch the thought’; but while the watching happens, if a thought arises, the resting in awareness is reduced. So it kind of seems mutually exclusive to watch and think. It’s kind of tricky to explain.

SUT: Yes, when the awareness is strong it is difficult to think intentionally. There is a level of thought that is subconscious, or at a subtler level. At the conscious level, yes, when the awareness is strong you can’t really think and when you think, you don’t seem to be so aware. That’s a very gross level. At a subtle level there are levels of thinking that never stop. Even if you are asleep those thoughts don’t stop, they manifest as dreams and so on.



So it’s that level of thinking that you can actually be aware of without losing your awareness, although it doesn’t stop. At the conscious level, yes, when you are aware, it feels like you are resting because you are not doing anything extraneous. If we are not aware at the conscious level the mind does a lot of gross thinking and that thinking takes up a lot of energy, it saps us of our energy, it’s not necessary sometimes.

I tell some beginners to recognize thinking whenever it arises, and because there’s a lot of this gross level thinking they keep trying to recognize it and recognize it, and they say, ‘Oh, it’s so tiring!’ And then the thinking reduces, and they’re so tired of thinking. They recognize that they’re thinking so much.

Yogi: And once the thought isn’t there, because I have been trained in a method that you go to the body, I just wait for my awareness to direct me to wherever is prominent, and I go with that. Is that the correct way?

SUT: Just continue like that. This subtle level thinking, this internal dialogue is what we are. It’s how we function. We do everything because our internal dialogue tells us to do it. Whether it’s to wait for the awareness to see where it will go, it’s all directed, but you don’t see it. You think it did it by itself... It’s like right there at the back of our heads, it’s directing the show. That’s the subtle level of thinking. But we are not used to turning back and recognizing that this is

directing me, and those are thoughts. We don't recognize that. So sometimes it's there but we don't even realize that these are the thoughts we're talking about.

For example when there's no more thought, your mind has already said to you there's no thought now. [Laughter] These are the thoughts I am talking about, but you don't know that this is thinking. It's not you thinking, it's a natural mental activity. A natural process. That is the thought that you want to see.

In that internal dialogue is all our motivation. It's the real reason we do things, whether we really have mettā or a defilement or whatever behind our actions, it's in there.

Yogi: Does it ever get to a point where thinking stops?

SUT: At the gross level we can know quite easily that there is no thinking, but that subtle level thinking... Sometimes when the mind becomes very continuously aware and gets very deep, sometimes it can get to where those subtle thoughts are very, very short. They don't do so much work anymore because they're not busy, there might just be a little bit here and there.

But at that level, there are still the natural functions of the mind where the mind naturally knows what's happening, therefore there are thoughts about what's happening, there's

the understanding of what's happening, and all that. All those thoughts come up. It takes concepts, like distance, it understands the concepts involved. All that we can't stop, it's automatic.

Another thought that we have is the sense of I, a sense of me. It's a thought that we hold, an idea, but we don't see it as an idea, it's so pervasive in the mind. We use words that always indicate the sense of self to us. We say 'I do this', 'this is my shoe', 'this is my place', 'she is talking to me', so we use it and that's an indication of that idea present in the mind, but it's difficult to catch it.

How many times do we notice during a day the use of this reference in our thoughts, in our interactions with people and situations? Have we noticed how much we reference the I? We don't even notice it. Even when we comb the hair and it falls, 'My hair, my hair...' [Laughter]

Yogi: But it's very hard. I try consciously not to use 'I', especially when writing or talking, and it's very hard to communicate without using it!

SUT: At the same time we can't not use the words. They are a tool to function in this world. But what we want to recognize is that we are using the word, and that in the moment that we use it and reference it, are we using it as a tool, recognizing that it is just a reference? Or are we fully invested in the idea?

When our understanding of the fact that it's a reference grows and we recognize it, then the belief in the reference becomes

less. We are more able in the moment to recognize that we need to use it as a reference and not as a real idea.

When you don't understand, then when you're angry you believe how angry you are. When you begin to understand then you still say 'I am angry', it's still anger, but you are not so fully caught up in how much you believe you are angry. There's not so much power in the idea that 'I am angry'.

My teacher very seldom used the word 'I', he would indicate by saying, "Here, here." He would say, "Here is saying..."

Yogi: How to keep with just letting this rain of ideas fall, and not catching on? Not responding? Is it a good idea to just let the ideas arise and fall? How can we avoid engaging with these ideas?

SUT: There's a subtle difference: we're not trying to prevent the mind from getting involved. At the same time, if the right work is being done, yes, the mind won't get involved. So if the mind is—if you're aware of the awareness—less likely to get involved in the rain of thoughts.

When you recognize the meditator, the awareness, you have an eye on whether the meditator is doing its work or not, so it continues its work. When you're not so aware of the meditator then sometimes the attention then strays to what you're being

aware of, and then sometimes the ideas attract you and you get sucked in.

So you check whether the mind is more aware of the concept of the experience or the reality of the experience. Know the difference between the subject of a thought and recognizing that thinking is happening. If you weren't being aware you would be in the subject of the thought, just thinking, but if you're aware there can be recognition that thinking is happening. This is thought, and that's the reality.

Yogi: Does Sayadaw encourage holding on to the element of reality? And the other thing is about exploring: if you can use as a barometer, as a test, if you're still in touch with the subtleness of the sensations, can you then try and expand on the thought as well?

SUT: Yes, definitely both. It has to do with how much wisdom or intelligence is there, how much the mind understands. It is when you have that level of understanding that you are able to hold on to something and then investigate subtle things like thoughts, and their nature, and what they're like. Not intellectually but to be able to watch them and understand their construction and deconstruction, or whatever.

Just as an example, we notice our thoughts as words, as images: in what other ways do we experience thought?

Yogi: As emotions, feelings.

SUT: Emotions are separate, feelings are separate from thinking. Thinking is one function, feeling is another function.

Interpreter: Sometimes we just know there was a thought if there weren't words, an image.

SUT: The conceptual part of the thoughts help us to know there is thought, like words and images, but there are other realities behind thought: the motivations behind the thoughts, and how a thought is just a thought.

When we're angry we think, but the anger is separate from thinking. Thinking is just doing that function, the anger uses it as a vehicle. And you can see these separate natures so to speak.

Initially we'll see the conceptual stuff about thinking and then we'll begin to be able to see beyond just the concepts and know some of the reality surrounding the nature of thinking.

Yogi: And within awareness or mindfulness, does thinking, as long as there's not too much of it, have a useful part to play?

SUT: Yes, you're exactly right. Not too much thinking, but when the thought process is to support the awareness, the noticing, how you want to direct it gently, not control it too

much. At the same time, you need to have a sense of direction, sometimes the mind forgets what else to do. So as you thought just now, 'Okay, I'll relax a little bit and then investigate further.' That sort of thinking is necessary.



And then when you have these thoughts that direct you, you can also notice that some of it is wise—as in your case—sometimes it's not wise, as in when it thinks it needs to choose something.

So it's very important to recognize them so that you can then choose whether this is possibly doing the right thing or the wrong thing. And even if you did the wrong thing, at least you know you made the choice and now it's wrong so next time you won't make that choice! Learn from it. It needs to be

there, don't think you can't have this process of learning as well.

[in English] Supervisor and worker—supervisor very important! If you know supervisor, worker boom-boom-boom [works very well].

The supervisor could be wisdom or it could be defilement. So you need to watch out and learn which one is wisdom and which one is defilement, as you see the effects.

When we're told not to think in meditation then we've basically told the supervisor to take a break. [Laughter] When we cut out the supervisor we then cut out both the bad and the good supervisor. You need to allow it, to learn which is good and which is not.

Tuning, Balance/ How to Practise

SUT: There are limits to everything. There is too much of anything. Wisdom will tell us when it's too much. When you begin to realize this is too much or too little then you learn to balance.

If we want to know what the right tuning is we have to listen to it continuously, not just turn it one way and then another. We have to watch continuously. That's what we aim to do in meditation, to turn it up and turn it down, to tune it.

Because we're not skilful in meditation we need to tune. We're all going to be too much or too little. Keep an eye on what we're doing, check whether it's sounding like 'eee'! [Laughter]

I have seen yogis who are tense up to the hilt. Who don't even realize that they are causing the tension. And then when they are told to relax, they go to sleep. Too much or too little.

It's like making lime juice, you have to have some sour, some sweet, some salt, to get the right balance.

I don't want you to use too much energy to focus because it creates tension. I want people to balance being relaxed and interested. Interest brings viriya naturally, without our individual effort. There's more wisdom. It's quite difficult to explain.

If I tell people to just focus, oh, it's very easy, they're good at it. If I says, "Not enough effort," people will just go all the way. Very easy for us to do that.

We're very, very skilful at using our defilements to concentrate, using anger to concentrate, using greed to concentrate. If we like something our mind is fully absorbed in it. If a girl passes by, our concentration is really there! [Laughter] Focusing and concentrating is so natural for the defilements. When we're angry we're also stuck on the object, we can't get our minds off it.

But when I say, "Don't focus. Use wisdom and interest," then if we don't understand what that means it's quite hard to get around to it.

What I am trying to do is program all of you. [Laughter] This programming is also part of the wisdom of the practice: getting the right information. With the program then we can use the application software.

Yogi: Talking about the awareness, I sometimes feel that I am the awareness. I get a bit excited, and more focused on it, and then it goes.

SUT: When this sort of view comes in, the feeling that there is just the awareness although there is the identification with yourself, it's very shy, so don't stare at it, don't put in more energy. Peek at it from the corner of your eye.

It's a very natural process. When the awareness becomes strong enough it seems to back away and then see itself. It's very natural. But if you think, 'Oh, this is good,' and then you get excited and you want it, there is craving, and craving disturbs the stability of mind. It's all natural cause and effect. When there is stability it will naturally back away and be aware of itself.

Generally, because of their training, yogis tend to be so involved in trying to apply their attention on to an object that they forget to do this. Even when the mind actually gets strong enough they are still busy training applying themselves to the object that they miss what's happening in the mind.

So although the mind might be backing up and being more aware of a larger view, they are not conscious of it because they're busy applying themselves to the objects. That's why it's so important to recognize how the mind is working. Just as it is, this is the mind at work, this is how it is working. If we

don't allow the mind to recognize itself and how it's working, then we can't get beyond that.

Then we don't get skillful with the practice because we don't see cause and effect. How the mind balances itself when it is working in a certain way, how stability of mind is developed because the mind has been applying itself, how this much focus helps this way, how too much focus or less focus doesn't help. All these things.



At any meditation retreat yogis always report good experiences and bad experiences. Sometimes they have a good mindfulness, sometimes they don't have good mindfulness. But if you ask them why, they don't know, because they aren't looking at how the mind has been being mindful.

We are generally so busy looking at what we are observing that we don't really realize how we are observing it. How did we observe it? Did we observe it gently? With greed? Without greed? Without expectation? What idea did we have? Did we go in simply or did we think 'oh this is good, I must do it'? What were the ideas at play when we were aware that made it feel like good mindfulness or not good mindfulness?

That's why we have highs and lows in meditation, rather than just slight humps. If you don't have good mindfulness, take a shower, it becomes good again. [Laughter] At the Meditation Centre when people are having a bad time trying to be mindful, they go and take a shower, everything is refreshed because the state of the mind has changed. So it's really important to know your own mind and how it is working and has been working so that you know how to adjust it.

When you understand your own mind and how it works, that makes you skilful at your own practice. Nobody needs to tell you how to adjust it, you start learning the machinations of the mind. That's why I keep talking about being aware of the mind, because it is especially important to know the mind that is doing the observing, how it is affected, and how it works.

Eventually that sort of understanding helps us to maintain more and more equanimity in our mind, we don't get upset with things because we know what to do with them. We know what's been affecting the mind so we are okay with it, to work with it, and so on. And when you can then maintain that sort

of understanding and equanimity, then you can bring the practice further. Or the practice will further itself.

It's like doing business. First, you have to understand how to make money, and then you have to know how to save it and grow it, and then you have to know how to expand it, to use that money to make it go further.

The practice of meditation is the same. First, you must learn how to practice, then you must maintain the practice for a long time. Once you can maintain a steady practice then you can use that to explore further, to maintain and grow it. All this is possible because of understanding. It's all the work of understanding, understanding how the mind works and understanding how to practice.

Some people know how to make money but they never save, they get money and they spend it, they get money and they spend it, so they don't get rich. They know how to make money but they don't become wealthy. You must not only know how to make the money, you must know how to make it grow. All this is the work of intelligence and wisdom.

Yogi: This wisdom mind, it jumps on 'you had a good experience', and then in the next sitting it's all fallen apart again. You get into a good experience and the next time you seem to be starting at a much more refined level, for example, maybe in the previous sitting you had a more coarse breath or your walking was more obvious, a strong or enjoyable

experience, and you think that's good. And then the next sitting you can't find the breath, you can't find the walking.

SUT: You mentioned how sometimes in one sitting it's good and then in the next sitting it just becomes more refined although you don't know what led to that. Therein lies the problem, we don't know what led to that. What happened in the mind? What was the mind thinking in between?

It's only when you are seeing what happens in the mind that you'll start to recognize whether the mind remained neutral and not expecting anything and therefore reached a more refined level. Or maybe some defilements came and then you found in the next sitting that nothing seemed to be right, that it didn't come back.

That's why continuity is important, especially continuity of awareness of how the mind is thinking and reacting to everything, because then you will see the cause for the next effect.

One of the things I tell yogis is if you have had a good sit, don't get up. Instead think about what you did, think about what the attitude of the mind was. If you were having coarse breathing, what was the attitude? When it became better did the mind think anything? Was it the same as when it was not good? What was the mind thinking? Why was it agitated? What was it wanting? What was it not liking?

And then from repeated checking of these things the mind finally begins to learn its lessons, it finally begins to realize what practices are not helpful, what sorts of thoughts are not helpful. And when it realizes for itself that these are not helpful, it learns the lesson and gives them up.

[in English] Learning the lesson is important.

But of course you can't force it either, the mind has got to learn the lesson.

[in English] If cannot learn the lesson, cannot change.

Upekkhā



Yogi: Is it valid to place the awareness on upekkhā and then watch what disrupts the equanimity as a defilement, and then, when that defilement is seen, bring the awareness back to the upekkhā again? And focus the awareness on upekkhā?

SUT: We're not trying to develop equanimity as a goal. Our goal is to be aware of what is happening in the present moment as it is. If there's upekkhā, yes, you can take upekkhā as the object. If a defilement arises that unbalances the upekkhā, the defilement becomes the object. And if the defilement is no longer there automatically the upekkhā is present again. Stay with the process as it is.

It is skilful to take upekkhā as an object when there is upekkhā, because when you are aware of the state of upekkhā you will instantly know when it is unbalanced.

Sometimes we are not able to recognize upekkhā. We are able to recognize when it's pleasant and able to recognize when it's unpleasant. When it's neither pleasant nor unpleasant we think that we are not feeling anything, instead of recognizing that that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, which is possibly upekkhā. [Laughter]

Watching Defilements

Yogi: How do we observe defilements that arise in the mind?

SUT: First we need right view, then mindfulness. First, know that the defilement is not ‘mine’. The defilement is an object in the mind, it is a thought that has arisen in the mind, recognize it as that and then you can observe it, ‘this is a thought that is happening in the mind.’

Once we take it as ‘my’ defilement or ‘I am having this akusala mind,’ wrong view is present. We will resist the defilement and it will increase, because then there is the original defilement, and also the new defilement that has arisen in the observing mind.

The attitude that you want to bring to the experience is ‘this is an object,’ ‘this is being known,’ ‘now mindfulness is conscious of this experience.’ That’s how you want to see it. Right view must be there even before mindfulness. Right view is even more important than mindfulness itself.

It is just as with people who are depressed: they keep thinking about how depressed they are and that makes them even more depressed.

The Buddha said, “When a mind with greed arises, know that a mind with greed has arisen.” He didn’t say, “Know that I am greedy,” or “Know that I am feeling greedy.”

When there is right view you can accept that ‘this is present’ or ‘this is the experience’ because you are looking at it in the right way. Then you can allow yourself to observe it, to be conscious of it, and not to fight against it.

We do not deliberately initiate the defilements that arise, we don’t purposely invite them, they happen naturally in the mind, they are an occurrence of mind. There are conditions present in the mind that make these thoughts and feelings arise. It’s a natural phenomenon, it is simply conditions giving rise to effects. You can just observe it.

Experiences that arise on their own as part of how the mind is have nothing to do with you. You are not in control of everything that happens. What you need to do, or what you can try to do, is to have right view towards all experiences.

Everything that we experience in the present moment is simply an effect of something that was done in the past. Simply effects of causes that have already manifested. You cannot stop them.

While you cannot change the past, you can change the present. You now have some borrowed wisdom and you can also use your own innate wisdom to think about what is happening, and consciously change your view towards it, so that you can accept it and just be aware of it.

Instead of allowing the effect in the present moment—this present experience—to overwhelm you and become a negative experience, what you can do is to see it correctly, to observe it. It will come and it will pass away in its own time. And if you do this, it will not snowball because you are not feeding it with wrong view anymore.

So use right view in the present moment, and be conscious. The defilement won't grow if you use right view and awareness.

Yogi: Sometimes we have to face some defilements that are difficult to bear. We work for a long time, we even give up because it gets so strong. It's usually the next day, usually after that it turns around. Sometimes it just disappears. And I was wondering, is this the nature of defilement, that before it is overcome it gets very strong? Or is it just abandoning the battle? The value of surprising the defilement?

SUT: You need to be careful of your attitude towards defilement. If you have a judgment that it's a difficult

defilement or if there's any resistance, it seems to make it stick around longer or become worse. Very commonly difficulty in meditation is experienced because we are not experiencing things as we would like them to be.

We also need to consider the power of the defilement that's being experienced and the power of our own practice. How strong is our sati samādhi? How sustained is our sati samādhi? How much have we been practicing? All that. We need to consider the balance of the powers. It can be that when the defilement is very strong and the power of the sati samādhi is not that strong that we will find it difficult going as well.

When the defilement is very strong and we are weak, then sometimes a direct battle is not possible, we won't win. In such a case we need to use our intelligence. We have to run around, poke it from different sides, try to topple him, poke him... [Laughter]

One of the tricks is to use a neutral object. You know the defilement is there, what you don't like or what you have difficulty with is there, but take a neutral object, something else, to build sati and samādhi. When you feel the sati samādhi getting stronger you can turn back and look at what was difficult. Just for a moment. And then you can come back. If it gets stronger then you can go to the neutral object. You can go back and forth.

If your sati samādhi is 70% and the defilement is only 30% power, then surely you can turn all your power to it and it will just dissolve. 50-50 is not enough! [Laughter]

This is what I means by using wisdom. We learn a lot of this from the work itself. The work of meditation or even our normal work. We must bring the same kinds of skills that we bring to our work to meditation, the same intelligence.

And there is no discounting the value of experience, in the sense of practice. The more we practice the more experiences we'll have, and the more we'll have to fall back on. We will have the lessons we've learned, more skills, and we'll understand more how to do it.

Yogi: What about these deep defilements we all have? They constitute so much of our personality and we don't even know that they exist.

SUT: Don't worry about the defilements—they are always there. Just practice to grow the wisdom. When wisdom is strong enough it will remove the defilements. Defilements do their own work. We can't stop things. We don't practice with the goal of actively stopping anything. Rather, the practice is to grow the good qualities actively, wisdom and awareness. So do what you can, don't work with what you cannot.

In the Buddha Dhamma it is explained that the defilements are the enemy and we have to extinguish the enemy, and all that sort of thing. But in practice we don't know how to do it in a wholesome way. The right thing to do is to rely on the quality that will be able to battle the defilement effectively and to grow that quality. So we don't directly battle the defilements; instead we grow wisdom, which has the ability to battle the defilements. Rely on wisdom, it will stand by you.



Yogi: In samatha, it's about getting rid of hindrances to focus on jhāna. As I understand it, Sayadaw's tradition is very much about focusing on where the defilements are and trying to eliminate the defilements and grow the wholesome roots at the same time, as a base for wisdom.

Interpreter: Hindrances are defilements, it's just another name, just another categorization.

SUT: The five hindrances are lobha, dosa and three different kinds of moha. Kamachanda is lobha, **byāpāda** is dosa, and then **thīna-middha** (sloth and torpor), **udhacca-kukkucca** (restlessness and worry), **vicikicchā** (doubt) are all moha. So they are the defilements.

The focus is not to eliminate the defilements. If we try to eliminate the defilements we will only try to eliminate them with other defilements, because we don't know how to eliminate them. We are full of delusion, we won't know how to get rid of something as skilful as a defilement. We have to rely on wisdom, which can deal with the defilements. So what we do is try to understand the defilements. How do they work? When do they work? What is their nature?

So that's why we use them as objects of observation. From the investigation of a defilement, when we learn more about it, we can become free of it, because the wisdom grows. When we investigate, invariably, inevitably, wisdom will grow. And it's wisdom that can eliminate the defilements. So we rely on wisdom, we don't try to eliminate the defilements.

Yogi: What is the best way to deal with defilements? This is a question I once asked someone, and the answer was once you've seen the defilement, it's not a defilement.

SUT: When you see the defilement is just a dhamma, is just another dhamma, then... If we don't see the defilement as defilement, what do we see it as? It's dhamma, nature. Kusala and akusala are both dhamma. Akusala dhamma and kusala dhamma.

Yogi: Today, when I was speaking I had some judgments, and I noticed a separation when I had that judgment. And then on reflection I noticed there was a subtle disappointment with myself for having the judgment. Sometimes I notice, or the mind notices some subtle thoughts, they might just be a flash, like a little, tiny image.

My question is, do I just keep watching? Because often after I have seen it, I can trace it back and find where that thought came from. Is that okay? To do a little bit of tracing back to the initial learning?

SUT: Yes, you can definitely do that.

I would like to add something. We often naturally feel pleased with what we experience or we feel upset with what we experience, disappointed that we were judgmental. We forget that we're aware of all this, we forget the awareness. It's only because we're aware that we see this. We should be happy that we were aware! Why do we not appreciate that we were aware?

That's why I really wants you to know the awareness, because that's when we appreciate it, and it's really important to appreciate awareness. All the defilements' attention is out there with the objects, they just look at the objects and then make judgments.

When I was little and I was starting to meditate, I remember my Sayadaw saying this to me, "Whatever you know, just be happy you know it." And that stayed with me.

I had so much faith in my teacher! I would know something, I didn't understand anything about the thing, but I would be so happy because I knew it!

It was in the years when I was practicing very hard that I began truly to appreciate the meaning of what my teacher had taught me. In the knowing, the awareness, there's a wisdom because we have brought attention to something. It's real. We know what is, as it is, and it's wholesome. The knowing is wholesome. Knowing and understanding are wholesome. So from a young age I have been very intimate with these terms of knowing and understanding, and being able just to appreciate that.

Mostly when we see negativities in our minds, we feel disappointed, we feel upset. Yogis come to me saying, "Sayadaw, I'm not like this at home, I've come to this centre and I'm so angry... so jealous... There are many bad things in my mind. I don't want to be like this, I'm not like this!"

But really they don't want to know. They don't want to know that there's negativity in the mind. They want to live in the delusion that they are fine. But that's crazy. It's madness to live in the delusion that 'I'm okay and I have no defilements', to be satisfied with that.

In the retreat in Melbourne in 2008 one lady came and asked, "Are you sure your technique is to purify the mind?" When she looked at her mind all she saw were the negativities. Before that she had been practicing ānāpāna and of course she had felt a bit of peace and therefore thought that it was purifying the mind. Once she turned and looked back at the mind and saw all the things that were there she thought, 'This practice is not purifying my mind.'

When the lady asked me this question it became very clear to me that yes, this practice will purify the mind because you are fulfilling the cause for wisdom to arise. You're bringing in awareness, and awareness will be the cause for wisdom to arise, which will purify the mind. I was very sure then.

I asked her, "Do you want to live with the delusion that the mind is okay, or do you really want to know what's in the mind?"



Yogi: When you start observing those little ‘nasties’ that you’d rather not see, just being aware, not trying to do anything with them...

SUT: You must have right view. This is nature, this is not my mind. Not mine. Then it’s easier to watch it, to understand its nature. Very few people realize that knowing what is bad is bad is wisdom. Right understanding.

Yogi: Most of the time we’re looking out at others whereas mindfulness is looking at ourselves. Mindfulness is looking at ourselves and seeing our negativities—

Interpreter: And positivities!

Yogi: All our qualities, and then trying to be aware to change them.

Interpreter: To learn about them...

Yogi: And gaining wisdom once we are able to turn it around, to turn the bad qualities into wholesome qualities.

SUT: First we need to recognize and understand that what is unwholesome is unwholesome. Only when we fully understand that it’s unwholesome will the mind want to clean it. If we know it’s dirty we will want to clean it, then it will be cleaned. The problem is when we don’t even know it’s dirty.

My teacher always said, beginning to know that you are not perfect is getting closer to getting better. But when we think that we are okay, there is something wrong.

Suppose a person knows everything about himself, everything positive about himself honestly and everything negative about himself honestly, if someone comes and praises him he will not easily be led; if someone comes and criticizes him he will not easily be disappointed. It’s bad not to know. In Burmese there’s a saying, ‘not knowing is so bad’.

Yogi: Can you have all the defilements lobha-dosa-moha at once? It was confusing for me but looking back actually had all the elements. They usually get separated...

SUT: Experientially, yes, it can feel like everything at once. Theoretically delusion can arise with greed or aversion at any one time, but experientially, because it all happens at once, you can be angry and wanting to be angrier, which is greed. And things like that. So yes, you can experience all three at once.

Yogi: And then I get confused. Trying to feel something different.

SUT: The defilements tend to come like gangsters, in gangs.
[Laughter]

Yogi: It felt like being besieged!

SUT: When there is attachment there is also the fear of losing what you're attached to, that's the lobha and the dosa again. Fear is dosa.

Yogi: The defilements and so on, it's not at all completely obvious why they're not wholesome. It's not obvious. In a way the average person's experience doesn't really answer...

SUT: That's why awareness is necessary. Most people have had many experiences but probably not had much awareness. And that's why they can't understand. If we are angry for a long time about something—

[in English] Very strong and very long time.

We have a good opportunity to just observe the anger for a long time, but also to observe it with equanimity. Observation over a long time will give you a fuller picture.

Wisdom/ Understanding

Yogi: When we make a decision, we use our wisdom. But every experience is new. How can we balance wisdom and judgment, or prejudice?

SUT: How does wisdom arise? Essentially wisdom arises when the mind is free of the hindrances, when there are less defilements in the mind, when it's calmer. That's when wisdom is able to function. For every situation you need information, particularly if it's a new situation.

If the mind is calm and seeing clearly but there is no information then you need to make the effort to gather some information. Once you have the required information and the mind is clear, with that information the mind will see what needs to be done.

I noticed in myself that whenever I go to a new place the mind starts looking around because it is not familiar with the place. I look where the toilet is, where the exits are, who lives where.

Once the mind is familiar with the place it knows, 'Okay, now I can go round this place.' If we don't have enough information the mind feels agitated. It feels insecure.

Yogi: You said as the defilements recede wisdom arises. Does that mean that in every mind there is an inherent wisdom but that it is blocked by defilements, and when we reduce defilements wisdom arises?

SUT: In every mind there is the potential for wisdom to flower when the defilements are reduced and sati is present in that mind. Sati is a prerequisite for wisdom to arise. In abhidhamma all the ñāna minds are with sati. Without sati, the ñāna minds cannot arise. That's why when we can maintain sati and samādhi, because samādhi suggests that the defilements are weak, wisdom can arise.

When all the five faculties—sati, samādhi, viriya, saddhā and paññā, paññā in this case meaning what you know in order to practice—are put together with whatever theory you have, and the defilements are less, when it keeps going the potential wisdom that is there has the space to flower. It can then slowly grow.

Yogi: So there's always potential wisdom?

SUT: Yes. It's just not strong.

Another Yogi: Although I have experienced looking at anger and looking at aversion and seeing them subside, I've experienced it but I don't understand it. Although I understand how you can reduce the defilements, I don't understand why they would lessen by being looked at.

SUT: It takes many, many observations of defilements, watching them, watching them subside and so on, before understanding arises. I did a lot before understanding began to arise, maybe two years of continuous observation....



Yogi: In hearing Sayadaw talk about intelligence and wisdom, I'm now thinking creative and inventive. And that gives me a good feeling. I think that's what I often need to do, to open my mind to be creative and inventive because I'm presented with something like anxiety, and it's like I've only got one approach to it that doesn't work.

SUT: Not to blindly use just one thing but to root around.

Yogi: It also automatically gives me a sense of increased energy because interest is there.

SUT: We limit ourselves to the few things that the teacher tells us sometimes. Actually these are just pointers. We must use our own wisdom. When we are in real difficulty necessity is the mother of invention.

Yogi: I know with greater wisdom I will see the light, but I don't see it now.

SUT: We cannot imagine what it would be like to be without attachment to these minds, all we can do is to walk the path. There is no need to imagine what it might be like because it's impossible for you to imagine how it might be better or worse, or whatever. The only answer we'll get to imagining what it might be like is probably the opposite of what it actually would be like. We can never imagine how wisdom could be. So live with what is present. Live with what we have now.

Yogi: A person was told to be 100% responsible for your own emotions and for your reactions to other people. He had probably heard it before, but on that day it landed for him. Not that he can do it perfectly—but that commitment did happen. I'm puzzled by that. Why does it happen? It's like luck.

SUT: Many conditions must come together. There's a gathering of conditions, and also, possibly, in the immediate present conditions like being calm, paying attention, and being open come together. So all those conditions are present and you are thus very receptive. We are at our most accepting when our mood is ready, when we are in the right space.

We may come across an idea or a concept many, many times but if we're not in the right frame of mind at that time, or not receptive to it for some reason, we won't take it on. We smell things daily. We take the smelling it granted. We smell them, we smell them, we smell them... but the day I had an insight into the nature of smell I was shocked!

[in English]: Object is very simple, but understanding very deep.

That day as usual I'd been practicing all day. I went home to take a shower and I smelled the soap. At that point I wasn't

trying to practice but I was calm and receptive. I took the soap and smelled it, and suddenly it hit me.

[in English]: Why can the nose know the smell? The strong understanding that this is a cause and effect relationship and that this is the only way it will be, the anattā nature of it just hit me so hard, I was so amazed! After the shower I was going round to all my brothers and said, "Do you know, you can only smell with your nose?"

I went to tell my teacher about it and my teacher said, "When you understand something don't go and tell everybody, they'll think you're crazy."

Why is it so amazing? We all know that we can only smell with our nose. We all know that but the level of understanding is different. The objects that we experience are always the same, the six sense objects are always the same, but when the mind is ready and it realizes something, that's when...

Yogi: Can you elaborate on the word 'wisdom'?

SUT: When it happens you will know. [Laughter]

There are things that are currently beyond our understanding. Even normal vipassanā ñāṇas, they are not lokuttara ñāṇa. We can understand things at one level, for example understanding that things are as they are, or understanding

anicca in a theoretical way. I will tell you as a concept, I will use words, which are concepts, but the true understanding of it can be very deep.

So for each person, as much as we understand, that's the level to which we imagine it. When we have a new understanding we suddenly realize another level of it.

Yogi: I'm just wondering what kind of approach Sayadaw takes, what kind of wisdom does he actually use when things comes up in the mind?

SUT: My tendency is to use anatta, that things are just as they are, not personal, there are many ways that you can explain anatta. At the same time I am very wary of people intellectualizing it too much. If you keep talking to yourself and just ramming the right view in all the time, then you just have your theory but you don't have an understanding. This is why I say ask the question but doesn't look for the answer. Asking once is enough, you don't need to keep repeating it to yourself all the time.

Yogi: I'm interested in what key elements of wisdom bubble up in Sayadaw's mind as he deals with any old object.

SUT: Generally there are two different things. Sometimes there is suffering that I experience and I have no understanding that relieves me of the suffering, in that case I

apply the knowledge theoretically, logically, bhāvanā, with meditation, awareness, I watch it and try to learn about it, I look at it, until it might fade, or it might come again, until I understand it. That's when I work with it.



Sometimes there are types of suffering that come up and I already understand something about these things. And when I understand them, that understanding immediately comes to mind, and the mind is relieved of suffering surrounding this issue.

Interpreter: So I asked him, what is it specifically that comes to mind? What is his understanding?

SUT: There are things I have understood, for example that this is all nature, that this is not personal, or things are as they are, this is just an object, this is just being known.

Here is an example, when I understood that something was just an object. I was walking and it hurt. As I took each step it hurt and stopped hurting, hurt and stopped hurting, hurt and didn't hurt, hurt and didn't hurt... As I was looking I suddenly realized hurt is known, when it is not hurt it is known. Pain is known, no pain is known, pain is known, no pain is known. And suddenly I realized that's the nature of an object, to be known. When it's known, that's the experience.

When the mind took that view, then suddenly that's all it was. When it was painful the mind wasn't averse to it, when it was not painful the mind wasn't happy about it, because all it was, was being known. So when it comes to things that realization can bear upon, then that's how it relieves me off attachment and aversion around that.

Yogi: If the object is the nature, can the wisdom see more detail?

SUT: Yes, more detail, wisdom understands detail.

When we talk about detail in our daily practice, we think about detail as in thinking we are knowing more things, which is actually more concepts. We start to recognize 'this is

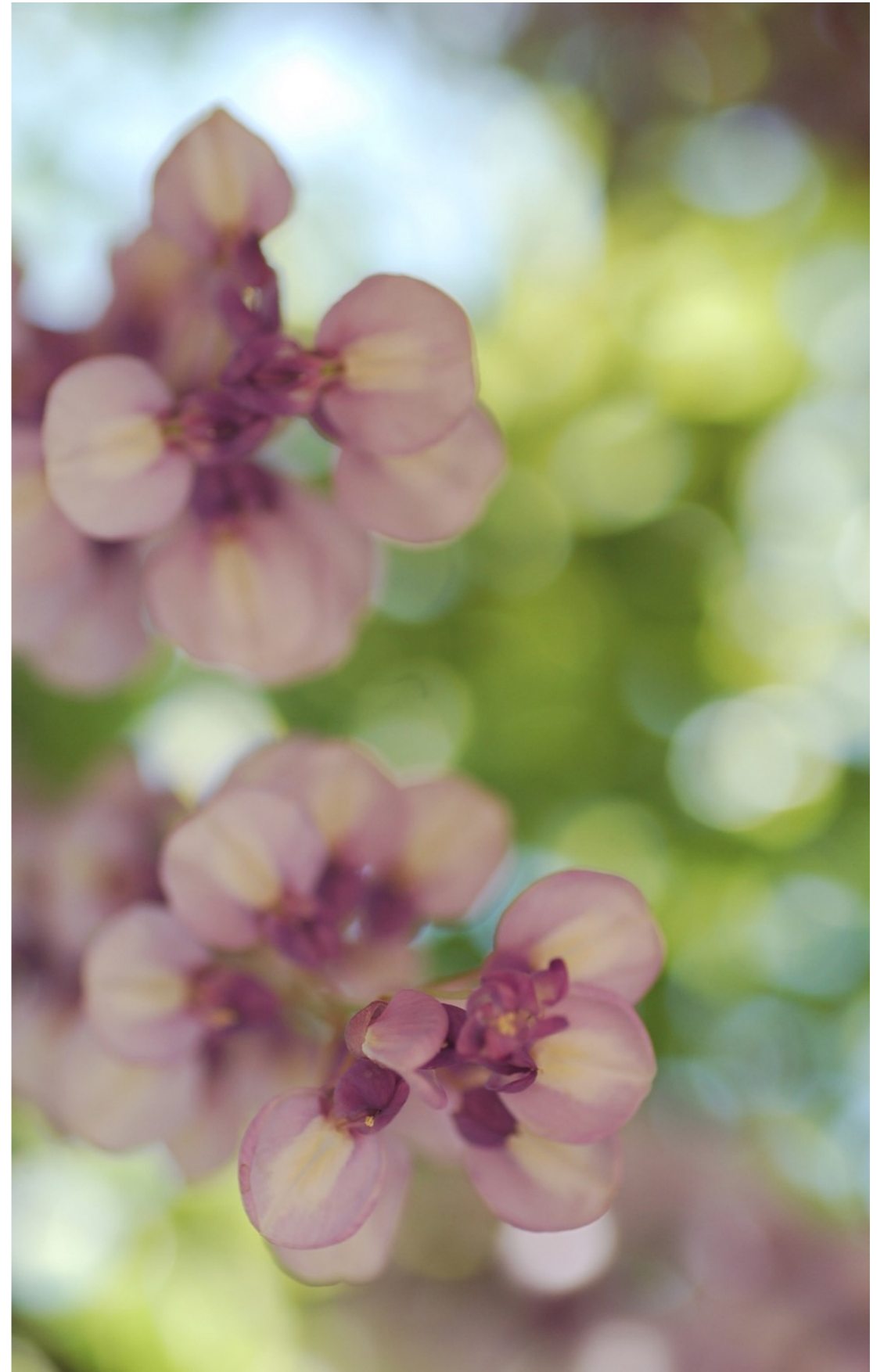
perception' and so on, a bit theoretically, but we start to recognize these functions at work, this nature at work in our mind, and we think of that as detail.

When there is an understanding, assuming that you're talking about a Dhamma understanding, when you understand that the fundamental nature of object is so, when you have that sort of understanding, then yes, there is detail, but not in the way we were talking about just now.

We will understand everything that level of wisdom is able to understand—because even when we understand something we don't always understand 100% of it immediately, do we? Say you understand 6% of the nature of understanding, then as much as your wisdom is, that's how much the mind will understand about everything concerned with the nature of the object. If your understanding was 60%, that's how much you will understand about everything concerning the nature of the object.

Dhamma Inspiration

The power to bring peace to the mind that comes from within the mind itself is the most powerful because it's always available.



Dhamma Inspiration

1. Being in the present moment means knowing as much of your experience in the present moment as possible. Knowing just one thing in the present moment is not called being in the present moment. If we practice like that then every day is like a sharp moment because there are so many things to know.

2. Naturally when the mind is angry it sees negatively, it sees the situation negatively. When there's no longer anger, naturally positive points of view can be seen, reasonable thoughts are possible, and it is possible to forgive. All this becomes possible when the mind is not angry.

When the state of mind changes, the thoughts change.

3. Very commonly difficulty in meditation is experienced because we are not experiencing things as we would like them to be.

4. There are limits to everything. There is too much of anything. Wisdom will tell us when it's too much. When you begin to realize this is too much or too little then you learn to balance.

If we want to know what the right tuning is we have to listen to it continuously, not just turn it one way and then another. We have to watch continuously. That's what we aim to do in meditation, to turn it up and turn it down, to tune it.

Because we're not skilful in meditation we need to tune. We're all going to be too much or too little. Keep an eye on what we're doing, check whether it's sounding like 'eee'! [Laughter]

5. Reality is always paired with the concept that we lay over it, but the reality of the concepts that we usually know has to be understood. It has to be understood that the reality is present with the concept. So reality is the object of wisdom.

6. Meditation is cultivation of awareness. If you're aware of awareness, you're cultivating it.

7. Remember that even with the simplest thing, the right thing to remember is that an experience is just an experience. There's nothing right or wrong about any experience. No experience is ever wrong. All experiences are just as they are.

8. Defilements believe in concepts, delusion believes in concepts.

9. The mind always takes the object that matches its qualities.

10. If we want to remember something we have to repeat it to ourselves constantly or use it constantly, then it comes easily but once we don't use it for a long time then you have to pull it again.

11. What do you want to know? If there's nothing we want to know, no questions will come to mind.

12. There is no end to be achieved. We're not going anywhere. We're not trying to reach anything or create anything. There is no hurry because there is no destination, the present moment is already here.

13. When instructions are read we must also make sure we understand them in the right way.

14. Without the concept we can never understand the reality underlying it. So what wisdom does is understand the reality which underlies the concept. So it goes beyond the concept to understand what lies beneath, what lies with it.

15. It's the maintenance of the awareness that keeps it ready, on standby, so that when we most need it it's there with all its gathered power to learn the lesson.

16. There can be no short cuts in meditation.

17. Hold on to the awareness. You can move, change posture, do anything you want, but don't let go of the awareness. Hold on to it tightly.

18. Moha and wisdom are opposite, but in degrees. If there is that much wisdom there is this little moha, and if there is that much moha there is this little wisdom.

19. Understanding is very different from just seeing something or observing something. We need to recognize when we understand things, and we need to recognize the understanding that accompanies our observations.

20. Every present moment is the effect of a set of past conditions.

21. Be careful really to be mindful and not just mechanically mindful.

22. Whether you are concentrating or not, if there is no lobha or dosa in the mind, the mind is calm.

23. When we think back, what is it that we feel proud of? Something that we have learnt, something that has made a difference in our own life. What is the proudest moment of your life? What in your life gives you strength? What makes you feel that it's been worth it? We need to find these answers ourselves because we each live our own life.

24. It's difficult only because we don't practice being aware in those situations enough.

25. Always checks back and forth. If we often know the experience and check how we are reacting to it, it gets to the point where we are always aware of our reaction when we know our experience. It becomes natural to know both.

26. All wholesome states of mind support other wholesome states of mind.

27. **Pīti** is a positive mind but it comes with slight agitation.

28. When we're speaking are we peaceful? Are we aggressive? Be aware of that.



29. If there's awareness it's good. Knowing what we are saying is also meaningful. If we are speaking mindfully and what we are talking about is related to the Dhamma, we can come away feeling more energized.

30. Every good thing in life has its price, we have to work to earn it. It won't come instantly, you have to work towards it.

31. In vipassanā, never think, 'how could I observe in order that an insight might arise?' It will never work. When the mind is simple and clear, with no greed, not trying to get anything, then understanding can arise.

32. My teacher always said, beginning to know that you are not perfect is getting closer to getting better. But when we think that we are okay, there is something wrong.

33. For long-term meditators, the biggest enemy to watch out for is greed. There's always something that the mind has its sights set on, that it's waiting to get. It's our nature. When we set out to do something we think we must get something from it.

34. The power to bring peace to the mind that comes from within the mind itself is the most powerful because it's always available.

35. Know that you're seeing before you look; know that you're hearing before you listen.

36. There is good news: the defilements are at the limit of their power already whereas the wholesome, the kusala has room to grow. So if there's any wisdom that grows it can challenge the defilement, and then the defilement will have to abdicate. The wholesome always wins over the unwholesome—eventually.

37. As little as we practice, that's the little bit of peace we'll get. And as much as we practice, that's as much peace or wisdom as we'll get. There is hope.

38. In meditation, in the Dhamma, there is no stopping because it's like riding a bike uphill. If you don't step on the pedal, you'll roll down the hill. If you don't keep stepping forward, you're just sliding backwards. First you must get to doing it, you must know how to do it, you go to do it, and you must be doing it until you gain momentum.

39. Whatever we see or hear, there is a cause and effect at work, there is a natural understanding. Whatever we hear, see, experience, in the end, the question for ourselves should be, 'What should I do now with myself?' We must come back to ourselves, the practice.

40. The object and the knowing of it are two sides of the same coin. We also need to get familiar with the fact that the knowing of it is a separate nature from the object itself. And then we get a glimpse into nature of mind, because nature of knowing is nature of mind itself.



41. There are four ways that we can understand reality. We can understand reality because we see the signs of reality, its signs, its characteristics. We can recognize reality by its function, what it does, how it works. We can understand reality because of the cause-effect relationship in reality, there is the near cause and the far cause. Lakkhaṇa, **rasa**, **paccupaṭṭhāna**, **padaṭṭhāna**. That's how you recognize reality: by its characteristic, its function, its near cause, and its far cause. For example we can recognize mind because it

arises. The mind arises. We can recognize that a particular function of mind is at work. We can recognize that it passes away. You can't hold on to a mind and look at it. That's not how we can tell the mind exists.

42. Check whether the mind is more aware of the concept of the experience or the reality of the experience.

43. At a subtle level, reality can only be understood, it cannot be seen. It will be understood and known to be so, but it's not like you're looking at it as we experience all the other objects. It's an understanding of the reality of that experience.

44. We have to investigate everything many, many times, and one of those times when the mind is in the right mood, when there's no greed or aversion in the mind, and we're just investigating naturally, one of those times something will be understood. But it takes repeated practice.

45. Generally at those times when understanding arises, the mind is strong, it's sort of at its best, there's been continuous awareness, there is no desire to understand something, there is no aversion towards the experience, there is full interest in the experience. It comes when you least expect it. And then

prior to that experience we've probably been watching whatever it is over and over again.

46. If you just understand that this mind is ephemeral, it will just come and go away, all you have to do is watch. If you know what feeds the defilements you just work with the cause and it can't be fed and it can't grow.

47. Minds arise one at the time, but it's when we have a succession of millions and millions of minds they have so much power, that's when we can't control it. If we can see it immediately when it arises, it's easier to deal with. If we begin to understand it, it's easier to deal with. Fires always start small, but when half the house is burning it's very hard to put out the fire. And then, instead of putting water on the fire, if we add gasoline to the fire! [Laughter]

48. Whatever we know is fun, just know it because it's important to know. If we develop this habit of knowing whatever comes up and knowing that we're knowing, it becomes easier to know in daily life.

49. It's not so much about whether we want to speak or not, it's about whether the situation merits that we should speak or not. Wisdom must be the guide.

50. Nothing we practice will ever go to waste. So practice to really understand death. Die if you must! [Laughter] My teacher used to say, the person will die but the wisdom will not die.

51. Keep the mind open to the possibility that there are other things that the mind might be recognizing, that because you are used to your habitual objects you are not recognizing that other things are being known by the mind.

52. For every moment of awareness there is a layering of the minds that work together to be aware of the moment. There is the object that you know and then there is the awareness of the object, that's the mind. There is always a feeling in the mind that is aware, and behind that feeling you will also have either some aversion, some attachment, or a neutral feeling.

And then behind this aversion, attachment, or neutral feeling there is an idea that gives rise to whether your mind is neutral, attached or averse. So there is a layering in the mind in every moment, but you can't see it right away. You need to allow your mind to be open to the possibilities, so that as you watch just you might start to realize, 'Oh, the mind is watching this,' and you might start to realize, 'Oh, there is some feeling behind it.' Slowly let it happen.

53. One of the things that you could know is the awareness itself. When you are aware of the awareness, of the mindfulness itself, the view becomes sort of inverted, because in fact all objects are coming to the mind. They impinge on the mind and that's how we become aware of them. Generally we seem to pay attention to something else, but when you become aware of the awareness you notice the impinging of all the senses on the awareness, then you feel like everything is coming in to you.

54. What is it? What is happening? Why is it happening? How is it happening? Any one of these questions always helps. When the mind asks a question to which it doesn't yet know the answer it always awakens the mind because it wants to know.

55. If you have liking or disliking for some object, you should not use it as a meditation object. First take care of your liking or disliking. If you're neutral, then you can use any object.

56. We must remember that the state of the mind colours our experience. The experience itself is never real, it is always coloured by the colour of the mind. It's like the members of our own family: sometimes we love someone to death and sometimes we can't stand them—the same person!

What you are feeling at that time colours your feeling towards the object. If we look only at the object we'll never know the truth about it because it is already coloured by our opinion.

57. When meditating it's always good to give yourself some space, not to be in a hurry to achieve, give yourself some breathing room. Think about it a little bit: how should I practice? How should I approach this?

58. Knowing is actually the nature of the mind, one of the names of the mind is knowing, aware—the mind cannot not know. You don't need to make an effort to know, the nature of the mind is to know. What we're lacking actually is strength, it's more a sort of gatheredness, a momentum of being conscious of the nature of the mind, which is knowing. When you know that for long enough, then there is a power to it that you just weren't conscious of before.

59. For the yogi, there's not a lot of work you need to do because you are not trying to achieve anything. You are just trying to do three things. Have right view, be conscious, and sustain it. It's very simple work.

60. This practice is for life. First you need to understand how to practice the right way, then you can practice the whole life. No need to hurry.

61. When the mind doesn't see in the right way, that's when it suffers. When the mind doesn't know what's right or what's wrong, doesn't know the truth about things, then it just has its own idea, it thinks this is better or that is better, and then it clings to what it thinks is nice, and then it suffers because of what it's holding onto.

62. All wisdom starts from **sutamayā paññā**, from borrowed wisdom. So that is very important, the source of that, and the kind of wisdom. The more right information we have, the more of the borrowed knowledge is correct, then the more correctly we can use our faculties to further wisdom.

63. The whole world is actually only in and at our six sense doors, its not out there. We experience everything we think of as in our world at our six sense doors. We directly experience only the six sense doors.



64. The mind is always carrying out all its functions. All the functions are always working, but your awareness and your wisdom determine how much of that you will recognize. We just have to keep practicing so that wisdom grows.

65. When we begin to feel that the practice has a value in our life, that's when our faith in the practice grows, and that supports us to keep practicing. Knowing how we benefit from the practice is something that is also part of the wisdom that must grow in the mind. We have to recognize these things for ourselves.

Dhamma Reminders in Guided Meditation



1. There's no need to look deeply into the object, just be awake and conscious.

2. Not trying to prevent anything, not trying to not think, not trying to be still, just being aware of what is happening naturally as it is. Are you sure that you are aware? Do you see the difference between the awareness and the experience, the difference between the knowing and that which is being known?

3. Is the mind aware or just thinking? Can you be aware that there is thinking of the thoughts? Thinking is the mind, feeling is the mind, knowing is the mind, having awareness is the mind. Wanting to move, to shift, is also the mind.

4. What is that mind feeling? Feelings are always there, there are always some feelings. Pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. If the feeling is neutral, recognize that the feeling is neutral, know that the feeling is neutral. It's not possible not to have a feeling, it's not possible not to have an object, there are always objects, experiences, there are always feelings, the mind is working all the time.

5. Without listening you still hear. Knowing sound is called hearing. All kinds of hearing are happening, not 'I am hearing'. When we don't know that there is knowing a sound, and that is hearing, we think 'I am hearing'.

6. You must understand, this principle is the same at all the other sense doors with all the other sense objects.

7. The mind that is aware, the mind that is not aware, you need to recognize the differences. How is it different, what is different, how much does it differ?

8. You must always be checking the quality of the mind. Is the mind awake? Is the mind sleepy? Is the mind dull? Is the mind interested?

9. Whenever you are knowing, whatever you are experiencing, don't judge what you are knowing, appreciate the fact that you are knowing something. Understand the value of awareness itself. In any moment, how much more can you know?

10. Don't stop meditating, the posture will change, your actions will change, your environment will change, don't change the state of awareness, of being aware of yourself.

11. The retreat center and outside the retreat center are all the same. Allow the environment to change, don't change the mind being aware. No matter where you are, what you do, try

to be able to continue being aware, to continue meditating. It doesn't take a lot of effort, just remember, try not to forget.

12. The object is not important, the mind is important, that there is awareness in the mind is important, or that the mind is aware is important.

13. Meditation is the cultivation of all the good qualities of mind. Bhāvanā means cultivation. Cultivating, allowing good qualities of mind like awareness, stability of mind, sati, samādhi to grow, to be cultivated in the mind.

14. That knowing nature is mind.

15. Whatever you know, you will call it the object. Or whatever you know will be called the object, it's called the object. So many things to know.

16. The mind has no shape, it has no colour, it has no size, it has no place. But you can know that the mind is working, that minds are happening, that the mind is functioning.

17. Knowing is mind. Paying attention is the mind. Thinking is the mind. Feeling is the mind. Wanting to know, wanting to do, wanting is the mind.

18. If you are dull, sleepy, not that clear, you can open your eyes and continue being aware.

19. Does it feel relaxed in your heart? Does it feel at ease and comfortable in the heart?



20. Are the facial muscles relaxed?

21. Just checking.

22. You can move if you need to, if you wish to move you can move, you can change your posture. Be comfortable, all it needs is to remain aware of what you are doing, whatever you do.

23. You need to recognize that you are aware. When you know there is awareness, when you recognize there is awareness, the mind feels safe, peaceful, it's meaningful.

24. We are not born with awareness and recognition of awareness.

25. In awareness, the noble eightfold path is working.

26. While we are aware, knowing that the object is the object, this is nature, not a person, understanding that, there is right view.

27. While there is awareness and we are not thinking unwholesome thoughts about anyone, we are not speaking unwholesome words, we are not committing any unwholesome actions, then sammā silā of the noble eightfold path, right speech, right action and right livelihood are being practiced.

28. There is right effort, right awareness, right concentration, so the samādhi portion of the noble eightfold path is also being practiced.

29. When we have silā, samādhi and paññā, we are practicing the noble eightfold path.

30. So we need to learn how to appreciate awareness and all the work it does.

31. And the practice of awareness can be taken everywhere, we can be aware anywhere so long as we have practiced, made ourselves skillful in it, it can be used.

32. When there is no desire there is completeness.

33. To say we have progressed in meditation means that the sati, awareness, the samādhi, stability of mind, and the paññā, understanding, are growing.

34. When the forces of dhamma are strong then the opposite forces or defilements cannot be so strong.

35. Because the mind arises to pass away, there has to be constant effort to continue being aware, to continue practicing.

36. And although the mind arises to pass away, the qualities in the mind leave a legacy for the succeeding minds. So when you cultivate good qualities the legacy is left to the future minds and continuous practice makes the subsequent minds stronger and stronger, better and better. That is call fulfilling our pāramī or our perfections.

37. Every moment of knowing is a removal of small moments of not knowing, of delusion.

38. Knowing what is happening as it is, knowing the truth as it is, is removing the delusion or wrong view.

39. Knowing what's real and assuming things are opposites. Knowing what is real is the opposite of assuming.

40. As we practice more and more the mind must gain strength. Why does it seem like the mind sometimes gets weaker?

41. Double check what work the mind is doing. What is it up to?

42. We have to constantly practice in all and different environments, the mind tends to be affected by its surroundings, and we need to understand how the mind is affected and influenced to understand it better.

43. The awareness needs to be a wholesome awareness.

44. Don't control the experience or the objects, don't try to change the experience or the objects, check the state of your mind often.

45. Attitudes, feelings, body sensations, if you can know all of them at the same time, it's better. Attitudes, feelings, and all the other objects.

46. Are you sure that you are aware?

47. While sitting, can you recognize intentions in the mind?

48. Why do we breathe?

49. All experiences are new. Every phenomenon is new, there is nothing that we experience again, everything that we are experiencing now is new.

50. Are you indulging in the moment or are you being aware of it?

51. Be awake and alert in the present moment.

52. Make sure the awareness is clear, make sure you are aware.

53. The most important thing to know is the awareness. You are being aware. How are you being aware? Are you interested in what you are being aware of? Are you interested in being aware?

54. While you are being aware, can you recognize the wisdom that is there? Is there anything more that you are beginning to understand?

55. Right effort means never giving up. Perseverance, persistence.

56. Wherever you go, whatever you do, whatever time it might be, don't lose the awareness.



Akusala

kammically unwholesome, unskillful

Related Glossary Terms

Kusala

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Chapter 2 - Concepts and Reality

Ānāpāna(sati)

(awareness of) breathing

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Concepts and Reality

Anatta

- a) not-self, non-ego, impersonality, there is no abiding substance (or an ego, a self, or a soul), there is no self- existing entity
- b) nothing can arise on its own or from a single cause and nothing can exist or move on its own
- c) one of the three universal characteristics of existence (see dukkha and anicca), understanding anatta is a liberating insight (paññā)

Related Glossary Terms

Anicca, Dukkha

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Mind Process

Anicca

- a) impermanence, all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, everything that comes into existence changes and passes away
- b) one of the three universal characteristics of existence (see dukkha and anatta), understanding anicca is a liberating insight (paññā)

Related Glossary Terms

Anatta, Dukkha

Index

Chapter 2 - Personal Effort/ Right Effort/ Effortless

Anusaya

potential or latent defilements

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Magga ñāṇa

Ārammana

object

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Drowsiness/ Dream like states

Avijjā

synonym for moha

Related Glossary Terms

Moha

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Delusion

Ayoniso manasikāra

a) wrong attitude, wrong frame of mind, wrong attention

b) unwise consideration

(opposite of yoniso manasikāra)

Related Glossary Terms

Yoniso manasikāra

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Bhava-taṇhā

craving for existence

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Bhāvanā

mental development, meditation

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Bhāvanāmayā paññā

wisdom or knowledge acquired through direct experience, through mental development

Related Glossary Terms

Cintāmayā paññā, Sutamayā paññā

Index

Find Term

Bhikkhu

fully ordained monk, member of the Saṅgha

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Brahmavihāra

divine states of mind; a name collectively given to mettā, karuṇā, muditā, and upekkhā.

Related Glossary Terms

Karuṇā, Mettā, Muditā, Upekkhā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Mettā/ Karuṇā

Byāpāda

Ill will, malevolence

Related Glossary Terms

Thīna-middha, Udhacca, Vicikicchā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Watching Defilements

Cetanā

intention

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Intention

Cetasika

mental factor (This refers to the 52 mental factors listed in the abhidhamma. Some are kammically neutral, some kammically wholesome and some kammically unwholesome.)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Awareness and No Awareness

Cintāmayā paññā

wisdom or knowledge acquired by thinking and reasoning, by intellectual analysis

Related Glossary Terms

Bhāvanāmayā pāññā, Sutamayā paññā

Index

Find Term

Citta

mind

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Nibbāna

Cittānupassanā

contemplation of the mind

Related Glossary Terms

Dhammānupassanā, Kāyanupassanā, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, Vedanānupassanā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Satipaṭṭhāna

Deva

deity, divine being

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Fear/ Projection of mind

Dhamma-vicaya

investigation of phenomena, investigation of dhamma view, belief, speculative opinion

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Dhamma/dhamma

Dhamma - Teachings of the Buddha

dhamma - conditioned object

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Objects

Dhammānupassanā

contemplation of dhamma

Related Glossary Terms

Cittānupassanā, Kāyanupassanā, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, Vedanānupassanā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Satipaṭṭhāna

Diṭṭhi

micchā-diṭṭhi (wrong view) / sammā-diṭṭhi (right view)

Related Glossary Terms

Micchā-diṭṭhi

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Every moment is new

Dosa

hatred, anger, any kind of aversion or disliking (including sadness, fear, resistance, etc.)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Formal practice/ Retreat/ Daily Life

Dukkha

- a) unsatisfactoriness, pain, suffering
- b) the suffering in change
- c) the unsatisfactory nature of all existence, of all conditioned phenomena
- d) one of the three universal characteristics of existence (see anicca and anatta), understanding dukkha is a liberating insight (paññā)

Related Glossary Terms

Sukha

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Nibbāna

Dukkha-dukkha

unsatisfactoriness, pain, suffering

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Indriya

the five spiritual faculties: sati, samādhi, viriya, saddhā, and paññā

Related Glossary Terms

Paññā, Saddhā, Samādhi, Sati, Viriya

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Jhāna

meditative absorption

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Jhāna

Kamma

volitional action (of body, speech, and mind)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Kamma

Karuṇā

compassion

Related Glossary Terms

Brahmavihāra, Mettā, Muditā, Upekkhā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Patience/ Persistence

Kāyanupassanā

contemplation of body

Related Glossary Terms

Cittānupassanā, Dhammānupassanā, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, Vedanānupassanā

Index

Find Term

Khandha

five aggregates or categories: rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Khanti

patience; forbearance

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Patience/ Persistence

Kilesa

defilements, unwholesome qualities of the mind, any manifestation of greed, anger, and delusion (see lobha, dosa, and moha)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Kusala

kammically wholesome, skillful

Related Glossary Terms

Akusala

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Lakkhaṇa

characteristic; a quality

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Personal Effort/ Right Effort/ Effortless

Lobha

greed, any kind of craving or liking (synonym for taṇhā) path

Related Glossary Terms

Taṇhā

Index

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Magga ñāṇa

path knowledge (leading to Enlightenment)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Concepts and Reality

Magga-phala

literally “path and fruit”; synonym for Enlightenment

Related Glossary Terms

Sotāpanna

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Nibbāna

Magga-phala citta

Path- fruition minds

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Nibbāna

Māna

pride; conceit.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Mettā

loving-kindness, selfless love, unconditional love

Related Glossary Terms

Brahmavihāra, Karuṇā, Muditā, Upekkhā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Awareness + wisdom, Investigation, asking questions, interest

Mettā bhāvanā

cultivation of loving kindness

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Micchā-ditṭhi

wrong view

Related Glossary Terms

Ditṭhi

Index

Find Term

Moha

delusion, ignorance, not understanding, not seeing reality (synonym for avijjā)

Related Glossary Terms

Avijjā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Muditā

altruistic or sympathetic joy

Related Glossary Terms

Brahmavihāra, Karuṇā, Mettā, Upekkhā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Society, Family

Nāma

mental processes, mind (collective term for vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, and viññāṇa)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Intention

Nāma-rūpa

mental and physical processes

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Nāma-rūpa

Ñāṇa

synonym for paññā

Related Glossary Terms

Paññā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Nibbāna

Nibbāna

free from craving; emancipation; the final bliss

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Nibbāna

Nīvaraṇa

obstacle or hindrance (to the progress of mind)

Related Glossary Terms

Thīna-middha, Udhacca, Vicikicchā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Delusion

Paccupaṭṭhāna

manifestation

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 3 - Dhamma Inspiration

Paḍaṭṭhāna

proximate cause

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 3 - Dhamma Inspiration

Pāli

name of the language in which the Buddhist scriptures (Pāli Canon) were first recorded

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATOSAMMĀ SAMBUDDHASSA Homage to Him, th

Paññā

wisdom, understanding, knowledge, insight (synonym for ñāṇa)

Related Glossary Terms

Indriya, Ñāṇa, Saddhā, Samādhi, Sati, Viriya

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Paññatti

relative (conceptual) reality, concepts

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Papañca

taṇhā (craving), diṭṭhi (wrong view) and māna (conceit)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Awareness + wisdom, Investigation, asking questions, interest

Paramattha

ultimate reality

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Pāramī

perfections, potential “talents”: Perfection in giving, morality, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, resolution, loving-kindness, and equanimity

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Formal practice/ Retreat/ Daily Life

Pīti

joyful interest, enthusiasm, rapture

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 3 - Dhamma Inspiration

Rasa

function

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 3 - Dhamma Inspiration

Rūpa

physical processes, corporeality

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Awareness + wisdom, Investigation, asking questions, interest

Sabhāva-lakkhaṇa

natural and distinct characteristic

Related Glossary Terms

Sāmañña-lakkhaṇa

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Specific Characteristics

Saddhā

faith, confidence, trust

Related Glossary Terms

Indriya, Paññā, Samādhi, Sati, Viriya

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Samādhi

calmness, stillness or stability of mind

Related Glossary Terms

Indriya, Paññā, Saddhā, Sammā-samādhi, Sati, Viriya

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Sāmañña-lakkhaṇa

general characteristics

Related Glossary Terms

Sabhāva-lakkhaṇa

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Specific Characteristics

Samatha

tranquility meditation, concentration meditation

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Concepts and Reality

Sammā sati

Right Awareness

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Awareness and No Awareness

Sammā-samādhi

Right Samādhi

Related Glossary Terms

Samādhi

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Jhāna

Sampajjañña

clear comprehension

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Saṃsāra

cycle of suffering, round of rebirths

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Death

Samvega

spiritual urgency

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Formal practice/ Retreat/ Daily Life

Saṅkhāra

mental formations

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Saññā

recognition, memory, perception

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Awareness and No Awareness

Sati

mindfulness or awareness

Related Glossary Terms

Indriya, Paññā, Saddhā, Samādhi, Viriya

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

the four foundations of mindfulness, see kāyanupassanā, vedanānupassanā
cittānupassanā, and dhammānupassanā

Related Glossary Terms

Cittānupassanā, Dhammānupassanā, Kāyanupassanā, Vedanānupassanā

Index

Find Term

Sīla

morality, ethical conduct, virtue

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Society, Family

Sotāpanna

First stage of enlightenment

Related Glossary Terms

Magga-phala

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - 'I'

Sukha

happiness

Related Glossary Terms

Dukkha

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Awareness + wisdom, Investigation, asking questions, interest

Sutamayā paññā

wisdom or knowledge acquired through reading or hearing

Related Glossary Terms

Bhāvanāmayā paññā, Cintāmayā paññā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 3 - Dhamma Inspiration

Sutta

discourse of the Buddha

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Delusion

Taṇhā

synonym for lobha (craving)

Related Glossary Terms

Lobha, Thīna-middha, Udhacca, Vicikicchā

Index

Find Term

Thīna-middha

sloth and torpor

Related Glossary Terms

Byāpāda, Nīvaraṇa, Taṇhā, Udhacca, Vicikicchā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Watching Defilements

Udhacca

restlessness

Related Glossary Terms

Byāpāda, Nīvaraṇa, Taṇhā, Thīna-middha, Vicikicchā

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Watching Defilements

Upekkhā

- a) neutral feelings and sensations (vedanā)
- b) equanimity, a wholesome mental state (saṅkhāra, cetasika)

Related Glossary Terms

Brahmavihāra, Karuṇā, Mettā, Muditā

Index

[Find Term](#)

Chapter 2 - Society, Family

Vedanā

(pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral) feelings or sensations

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Observing the Observing Mind/ The Knower

Vedanānupassanā

contemplation of feeling

Related Glossary Terms

Cittānupassanā, Dhammānupassanā, Kāyanupassanā, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Index

Find Term

Vicikicchā

doubt

Related Glossary Terms

Byāpāda, Nīvaraṇa, Taṇhā, Thīna-middha, Udhacca

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Watching Defilements

Viññāṇa

consciousness, cognition, the knowing mind

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Vipāka

resultant

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Vipassanā

insight, insight meditation

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Concepts and Reality

Vipassanā ñāṇa

insight knowledge

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Chapter 2 - Magga ñāṇa

Viriya

effort, energy, “wisdom” energy, “mindfulness”

Related Glossary Terms

Indriya, Paññā, Saddhā, Samādhi, Sati

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation

Yoniso manasikāra

a) right attitude, right frame of mind, right attention

b) wise consideration

Related Glossary Terms

Ayoniso manasikāra

Index

Find Term

Chapter 1 - Meditation